

REPRESENTATIVE WOMEN • •

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**LETIZIA BONAPARTE**

*(Madame Mère)*

*by Clement Shaw*

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GENERAL EDITOR • FRANCIS BIRRELL



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Letizia Bonaparte (Madame  
M ere)



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# REPRESENTATIVE WOMEN

GENERAL EDITOR: FRANCIS BIRRELL

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LETIZIA BONAPARTE

(1748-1836)

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LETIZIA  
BONAPARTE  
(MADAME MÈRE)

by  
CLEMENT SHAW



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### *Bibliographical Note*

IN preparing this sketch I have accepted the guidance to sources of information suggested by M. Arthur-Lévy in the *Bibliographie* compiled in his *Napoléon Intime*. Lord Rosebery's *The Last Phase* has assisted me to any comprehension of Napoleon which may appear here. The *Mémoires* of Lucien and Joseph Bonaparte have supplied me with scenes, incidents and encounters for reference or relation; and *Napoléon et sa famille*, by Masson, with inexhaustible material for narrative. The *Mémoires* of the Duchesse d'Abrantès and Madame de Rémusat have especially helped me; so also have the *Madame Mère* of Larrey and the *Napoleon's Mother* of Clara Tschudi, the *Corsica* of Gregorovius and the *Corsica* of Renwick. Except for the dialogue in the early

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sections, the remarks and statements quoted are believed to be those of Letizia Bonaparte or her children. They are recorded by authors I have mentioned and accepted by them as accurate, sometimes with just conviction.

C. S.

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*LETIZIA BONAPARTE*

(1748-1836)



## Chapter I

# C O R S I C A

### BIRTH OF NAPOLEON

EVERY Corsican must come, his pistol or musket with him, his knife and his goatskin cloak—every boy above sixteen, every man under sixty. The Consulta, convened by Paoli, had proclaimed a *levée en masse*. Violent preachings from the old pulpit in the Franciscan chapel; Paoli's secretary, Carlo Bonaparte, vehement—"they must fight the French, resist to the last drop of blood."

The fishermen of Isola Rossa, clinging to their outspread nets in the May sun, argued as they mended. The loungers on the quay at Bastia spat sulkily into the sea, and cursed suddenly . . . the French, the Genoese. . . .

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Giant herdsmen came from forgotten villages clustered round the great mountain crests inland, and moved down towards Corte. The distant bandit, watching from the scented maquis, knew what had happened, and followed. In the noisy cafés of Ajaccio the townsmen talked excitedly in changing groups. In tall and dark Sartène they padded in the night over the soft dirt carpets, house to house. . . .

For hundreds of years, they asserted fiercely, Corsica had torn the flesh from her bones to free herself from Genoa. Warrior after warrior had risen, and marched them forth in one more effort to oust the Genoese garrisons from their coast towns. But now the great and sinful old Republic was worn out; her impotent Senate had wept when Paoli's fleet captured Capraja, and shamefully had sold their island to France. Well, for France they had Paoli, their Father, their warrior-prophet, their judge; he had armed them, a soldierly people.

Warrior after warrior, never in a thousand

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years without a champion; proud and headlong they had all been, these great Corsicans. Guidice della Rocca had conquered the island before he was given up to the Genoese by his own son; Arrigo had governed them until he drank Genoese poison. Vincentello d' Istria, making himself Count of Corsica, had been killed and his body thrown down the grand staircase at the Palace of Genoa. Giampolo had come with four Corsicans to raise the whole island and to see his army shaken to pieces with Genoese bribes. Renuccio, last of the Signori, bringing a handful of men—always defeated; at last slain miserably in the mountains by peasants. And Sampiero, friend of Bayard, had left the most magnificent courts of the world to sleep on the ground of bitter Corsica. Dark and hostile, sprung from the people, he had stabbed his wife, believing she meant to betray him and his sons to the Genoese: Vittolo, his own armourer, shot him in the back near Vico. Giafferi, who had died a

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failure in exile; Gaffori ordering his men to fire when the Genoese had slung his son in a basket over the citadel walls. Now Paoli.

Two hundred Corsicans held Furiani until it was battered into a rubbish heap: others burst through the French in the Casinca and on the bridge of Golo. Women rode with them, fighting sometimes with the men. Bonaparte's wife came with him from Ajaccio, "the most beautiful woman in Corsica"; at his side on her Corsican pony, along stony mountain roads, the rocky shepherds' paths in the maquis. . . .

Forty-five battalions came from France the next year, marching on the Nebbio. The Corsicans mustered again. Bonaparte's wife rode out with him on the campaign, resolute—"all their strength belonged to Corsica. They must fight to the last man." In her arms she carried Joseph, her infant son, and was enceinte with Napoleon.

When the French attacked them in their camp at Murato she was put aside with other

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women in the mountain fastnesses. During three days she watched the battle move about the maquis and over the rocks below; fascinated by the strife, untroubled by cares for her coming child. Freed from anxiety by the wild and healthy life in the mountains, by her "preoccupations," by the assurance, she a *dévoté*, felt in the protection of the Holy Virgin, she carried the child within her "with the joy, the tranquil happiness, the serenity with which afterwards she held him to her breast and nourished him."

In the evening she would step down through the towering boulders, through the overgrowth thrown over the rocks, turning up the dead brown twigs and treading down to the unclothed stone beneath, bare of moss; brushing through the wreaths of white clematis, beloved of the ancients, to hear of her husband and the war. She thought of nothing else. Descending through the coppice where the hills sloped up from the maquis. Pursuing the echoes of be-

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lated shots as they clattered through the trees to emerge upon the plain. Scenting the burnt gunpowder which pierced the drowsy sweetness of the tangles of arbutus and myrtle. Torn and crushed white heather and bruised cactus. The sudden black cloth in the green maquis—the troops, hot, untidy, and intent, as if of another world.

“They had not retreated far, Signora . . . Francesco and Mipalini wounded. Murato? They believed the French had taken it.” Ancient Phrygian caps were pushed back from thick furrowed brows; their hard and unconfiding faces were worn with the day’s sun and excitements. Paoli himself sometimes turned to talk with her, almost before action had ceased; she would urge him then to fight on.

A militia unready when the French pitched down upon it from the heights above the Golo; a militia twisting back in agony on the Ponte Nuovo. Prussian allies fired into it from behind, in confusion or brutal recklessness. Be-

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neath the Signora Letizia's eyes it was broken; comminuted, until each little island of flurry and firing was overwhelmed and silent.

Ninety more days and Napoleon would appear, "*brusque et inopiné.*"

The French pushed forward on Corte, the capital, destroying the chestnut groves and the huge cork trees, shooting trustful goats and suspicious peasants, urging before them a scared draggled of a hundred Corsican families. They drove the Signora and her husband, with their child, in flight to the Monte Rotondo, the highest peak in the island; beneath high masses of black granite, along steep and narrow sheep walks, above the wet red gorges of mountain torrents, through the pine forests to the summit. Heavy storms of rain hustled them into a cavern—the "Fugitives' Grotto" to this day.

Hunger, thirst, and the pursuing French. She was exhausted by the descent into the desolate amphitheatre at the summit, to the

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little patch of a lake lying black in the mist-darkened grass; chilled by the blue and wretched snow-cap.

Bonaparte was alarmed at the heaviness of the Signora's step, harassed when the first moments of pensive helplessness arrived; afraid to follow her glances, discovering their appalling solitude, when she wondered at the far blue streak of beautiful Tuscany and the wide arch of the coast from Nice to Rome.

At the end of a few days shepherds came in, crying news in their hurried descent. A French officer was climbing towards them. . . . The army had surrendered; Paoli was embarking for England; they might descend to the towns.

*"Place à la Signora. Place à Madame Bonaparte."* Slowly her servants pushed through the crowd in the Cathedral approaches, where townspeople filtered hurriedly through the cautious black-clad country-folk, and accosted each other with large gestures. Above, from the

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worn old windows of the tall houses, laughed white-dressed girls, white flowers in their hair. Flowers crowned the altars, and in the houses hung boughs of blossoming shrubs. An August morning and the fête-day of the Assumption of the Virgin.

The Signora Letizia's servants pierced the widespread, gossiping knots, which scattered at their touch and command, many of them flourishing out into salutations. The Signora acknowledged their greetings without smiling, closed and withdrawn even in the light of the fiesta. She held by the hand her young half-brother Joseph Fesch, but they walked in silence.

Her heaviness was hidden. At her breast she held the long black shawl round her slim shoulders; and the flowing gown was a concealment. Napoleon for the last time was in a crowd which remarked him not.

The great doors of the Cathedral were open: religion within and ribaldry without. High

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Mass awaited them, surcharged and scented, and on the Cathedral steps stood booths and gaming tables. Men bowed to her from the crowds—Corsicans, close-faced and suspicious as gipsies, who unfolded as they returned to conversation. . . . “The Signora Bonaparte—they had brought her back after the war from Monte Rotondo through the Niolo, difficult for her . . . dangerous. A frightening affair at the Liamone. Had he heard? Her horse was swept away in the torrent while she was bearing her son in her arms . . . the noise the river made there, you know! Men shouting, women shrieking; but she kept her seat and guided the pony out.”

Kneeling before the picture of the Madonna, praying for strength, Letizia was seized with pains. She did not move. They returned and recurred; she would be unable to wait till the service was over. She rose and walked from the chapel. The streets had cleared and for her they were empty; acquaintances might greet

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her but she ignored them. She could not reach her room. The child was born on a little pallet bed, hardly higher than a couch. A boy with a large head and a bright little face. Screaming outrageously, and "*bientôt tétant son pouce.*" Napoleon.

### THE CORSICAN WIFE

LETIZIA was nearly sixteen when she was married to Carlo Bonaparte. His uncle, the Archdeacon of Ajaccio, had recalled him from his studies at Pisa and his pursuit of a Pisan heiress, upon finding in Corsica a girl almost as wealthy, more beautiful, and not at all perturbed by a suitor's poverty. Bonaparte was presented on the day after his return to Captain Fesch, his wife, and his step-daughter, Marie Letizia Ramolino. He found his passion could be more easily and pleasantly transferred than annihilated, and called frequently. The Signora Fesch was worried about the match—the Ramolinos had been partisans of

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the Genoese for centuries, and these Bonapartes were friends of Paoli, the leader of the independent party. But she was induced to raise her objection, perhaps by Paoli himself, perhaps by the recollection that the families had often been united in marriage before. The Archdeacon hesitated then, in paunchy perplexity; she was too young to be married yet. . . . But she was so sensible, the Signorina; she might be older than her mother. . . . The Archdeacon still resisted. . . . Very well. If he could not marry her at once, he, Carlo Bonaparte—snorting—would bring her to his home without any consent of any guardians. Little more than twenty himself, he married her four days after.

The Signora Letizia had to pay for her husband's urgency with the common penalties for wives prematurely married. In the first four years three children were born dead, or died immediately after birth. Although she escaped the exhaustion which might have wrecked a

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weaker girl or one less perfectly made, she was to be confined by her home and family for the rest of her life. Even her strong interest in the island's politics disappeared as her family grew. Early marriage, also, deprived her of the opportunity of supplementing a training in childhood which befitted her only for household duties. She had never been to school, for Corsican women were seldom educated there. As children they were instructed by their companions, the domestic servants, in cooking and cleaning and carrying water, the national superstitions and the management of males. Corsica had no Pompadours, no de Staëls, but as many Pelasgian matrons as ever there were at the other end of the Mediterranean.

Letizia came from a home in which Corsican traditions still lingered. Her mother, a descendant of the old counts of Col' Alto, was the daughter of Pietra Santa, a nobleman, of vendetta-shadowed Sartène; Sartène, where the tall, dark houses step backwards up the hill

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from the sea, and the windows flash back the sun's beams unceasingly. At the time of Letizia's birth—at Ajaccio, most probably in 1748—her father, Jean Jerome Ramolino, was an inspector of roads under the Genoese. Before this he had been a captain in the Genoese army. An elder sister died in infancy, and a younger brother is recorded to have been born; he does not appear to have done much else, for nothing more is heard of him. Letizia's was probably a solitary childhood. When she was five years old she lost her father—replaced two years later by Franz Fesch, a captain in the Genoese marines, who had given up enthusiastic Zwinglianism to get married to an unrelaxing Roman Catholic. His son, Joseph Fesch, reserved in his life the peculiarities of the union by becoming a Cardinal under the Empire, and by binding himself to his step-sister in a lifelong and inscrutable intimacy.

The primitive order of mountain village households had not altogether been cultivated

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out of the Ramolino and Bonaparte families. The Corsican of the mountains—the shepherd, the goatherd, the land-owner sometimes—still demanded from woman toil and submission and her fulfilment of the destiny he assigned her as the instrument of his wellbeing.

The contempt for labour in fields or shops was as much a part of a Corsican as a stiletto and a savage temper, and even Napoleon betrays it when he surmises that English enmity is provoked by that tedious insult about the national propensity for shopkeeping. The manual work so hateful and dishonouring to the men was done by the women. Apparently in subjection, they were, like the women of most mountain tribes, powerfully developed both morally and physically by hard work and responsibility. Their seclusion from society and capacity for heavy tasks gave them the command of the home. There, even the masterful Corsican must have felt his wife's superiority, no matter how violent and impossible he might

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have been in village debates. His house, his flocks, his chestnut groves, his establishment were acquired and maintained by her. A common type of masculine matrons evolved from the wives, unvitiated and stable; capable of active belligerence in vendetta, and of achieving intense family unity in the island.

They could deprive their husbands not only of all comfort, but also of strength in the family warfare. The arrival of children, especially sons, was a relief for the head of a family when a habit of blood-revenge was carrying men off at the rate of a thousand a year. This satisfaction in a large family is too strong to be lost in a single transplanted generation. Letizia of later years will dislike the childless Josephine. Napoleon's welcome to the entering male and congratulatory approval of dutiful parents will be extended beyond the limits of his dynasty. "No children?"—is his charge against the Consulate women. "Perhaps it's not your fault. See that you get some." "You are married?

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How many children have you?" ("Sixty, your Majesty," answers one deaf and sexagenarian companion of Madame Mère.) He asks the Princess Augusta, whom he has married to Prince Eugène: "Try not to give us a daughter"; and advises: "I could give you a recipe, but you wouldn't believe it; it is to drink a little pure wine every day."

The rank of the Ramolinos and Bonapartes did not remove them from the influence of the island customs. They were respected by the Corsicans and honoured with titles of nobility by the Genoese. But a few years before, the unkempt herdsman would have broken bread with Paoli, the President, and talked familiarly with him; they might have been relatives. Ajaccio remembered Fesch in a woollen blouse smoking his pipe, and Napoleon *à la michaussette*; (it was Josephine who taught him to clean his nails). Antibes never forgot a Signora who washed the household linen in the village stream, nor Marseilles a young Jerome who ran

wild about the unsheltered kindergarten of the Cannebière. "Nor under the robe of the Empire was the primitive Corsican in Napoleon altogether smothered."

The Corsican wife had also a more attractive appearance than her husband. Every visitor—from Seneca brooding anciently on his tower, to the bicycling schoolmaster of the twentieth century—has perceived the difference between the "quaintness and ugliness of the men" and the "correct and tender features of the women." "They are well built," says the Prussian Gregorovius, smiling over the "gentleness of their eyes" and the "whiteness of their complexions."

The Signora Letizia and her husband had progressed beyond distinctions of this sort. The perfect shape of her countrywomen, however, was not withheld from her—the most beautiful woman in the island. Like them and like Napoleon she was small and finely made, with small feet and quick, finished hands. Her

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features were in a feminine and darker form than those of Napoleon, her face was slighter and elongated; and her eyes dark brown where his were grey.

She conformed to type in her beauty, her fruitfulness, and in her rule of the home; and a nation of superstitious women called her a *dévôte*. When she left the Casa Buonaparte it was usually for the Cathedral. "Austerely religious," she was assiduous in her visits and in coercing the children, assured that discipline gained by their hearing mass regularly.

She was not unsociable, but her household, her baby, and her religion were sufficient. It is unlikely she would ever have excited and embittered the little amateurish Corte society if her husband had not insisted on her invading it. They had been married four years when Bonaparte enlisted her in the service of his ambition; he could not play the great noble while the town knew his wife was preparing his supper. He was gratified by the impres-

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sion she made. The daughter of Madame de Permon agreed that she was certainly more attractive in society than her own mother; "more intelligent and original, though less correct, and far more fascinating because of her great beauty."

Her poise and shapeliness, the colour in her deep voice, her absence of enjoyment, brought admirers, although she had no favours for them but those of conversation. But there was aroused the jealous scandal with which every small and restricted society honours its ornaments. The ladies of Corte sat neglected and sour—in the cruel salon they spread their poor provincial fans, their ghastly smiles and scandal.

Paoli fêted a Tunisian embassy and invited the women of the chief families to meet them. The Signora triumphed on this battlefield of feminine ambition. The Corte ladies exchanged letters about her behaviour.

Joseph, her eldest son, is two months old

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when she spends Holy Week at Bastia, where the Bishop has called on the ladies to show an exemplary piety to the people by confessing before Easter. The Signora Letizia is one of the first to kneel at the confessional. She is unable, of course, to see the priest, but he is placed more happily. He contemplates the beauty of his unknown penitent. Perhaps it is that even middle-aged celibacy suffers its shocks from the rebellious flesh, or that the ladies of Bastia were not unready to submit themselves to a vicarious embrace. But the priest's inquiries become unprofessional, and he addresses immoral questions. The Signora waits, puzzled and not answering. The priest with the deftness of experience or the impudence of the utterly ignorant urges his *frivoles propos*. The Signora rises quickly to her knees alarmed, and loudly answers him—"My father, you forget yourself."

The priest is a villain—"I will withhold absolution."

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“Very well. But I shall make your behaviour public, now, to everyone here.”

The chapel is full, people are already looking; the confessor hastens to pronounce absolution.

The scandals are revived a few years later when the political opponents of Carlo Bonaparte address themselves to offensive speculation about Napoleon's origin. What they declared would have spitted the Imperial eagle on a bar sinister. Napoleon's birth is decidedly “*inopiné*” to Carlo, but not to his friend the Comte de Marboeuf. The opponents attack without agreeing in detail, and some of them incline to Paoli. They have successors of torrid imagination, who find a father in the Man in the Iron Mask. Remembering that the Governor of Pignerol was named Bompars, they would have his daughter married to the prisoner and smuggled off to Corsica under the name of Bonaparte.

The warlike spirit of her countrywomen in-

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spires her to a vigorous support of the War of Independence, and to a devotion to the warrior in her husband and children. Fifty years later she recalls Bonaparte— “tall and strong, like Murat.” She admires the beau sabreur in Murat, bouncing and jingling in the salons of the Empire and racing gaudily with his cavalry after a mob of Russian peasants; a lonely enthusiasm appearing strangely in a sorrowful old age. She shows this spirit by encouraging Napoleon to follow the profession of arms, by assisting him in his struggle for power in the island, and by her long antagonisms and her triumph at Napoleon’s early victories.

### THE BONAPARTES

BONAPARTE toasts the President. A replete and unctuous host dominating the noisy company—which leans with ruffles awry between tall yellow candles over the red beakers and long mahogany tables. He is celebrating his

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attainment to fully-fledged attorneyship with a banquet in honour of having passed his final law examinations. It costs him double his yearly income and may cost his wife her vineyard at La Sposata.

“A man of pleasure all his life”—Napoleon was conversing with his suite at St. Helena—“extravagant, and always wishing to play the great noble.”

He was considered handsome, with features wider and more open than his children's. In Italy he had been called the Conti di Buonaparte, for his family had been inscribed in the Golden Book of Bologna. He reassumed the title after the war in order to gain the advantages France offered to needy aristocrats.

His extravagance had made retrenchment necessary after four years of marriage. Letizia had been dowered with seven thousand livres in town and country property—considered a fortune in Corsica. But patriotism,

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pretensions and bonhomie on Bonaparte's scale were more than vineyard returns and legal fees could support. His appointment as Paoli's secretary he contrived to make more imposing and costly than remunerative. The success he had in attending his courts, and the distinction his wife had in holding hers, merely excused for him an advance in seignorial pomp.

Letizia abhorred waste, but yielded to her husband's lapses, uncritical or resigned. She set her face against uncontrolled ambition, but was firm in refusing to irritate him with reproaches. Bonaparte, too, probably made an irresistible penitent, and if by misrepresenting his needs he might obtain money, he would hesitate no more than most other Corsicans of his age. At Corte, soon after their marriage, she had been forced to spend more than her income in entertaining. She herself was driven into parsimony by his recklessness. It was his revelry among the fleshpots which forced her back to her innate abstinence—nothing but

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water to drink and meals eaten sparingly and quickly. "It's a bad habit I caught from my mother," explains Napoleon to a staff dragged empty from a hasty table.

With her friends she had dissuaded Bonaparte from accompanying Paoli into exile at the end of the war; so depriving history of a meeting between her and Dr. Johnson, and delivering the world from an English-born Napoleon.

During the fifteen years which remained to Bonaparte for fortune-hunting and debt-making his wife's bourgeois qualities matured. In his absence she grew austere and economical. The occasional burst of brio vanished. She concentrated on caring for her children and meeting the expenses of her husband's eccentric expeditions; enduring everything—drudgery, disappointment, and anxiety—"because it was sent her by God." The same confusion about the source of her difficulties occurred during the Empire, when her exacting son be-

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came to his family "their father, who must be obeyed in everything."

Her birth was higher than Bonaparte's, but she remained aloof from his extravagant posing. She, as well, felt the disregard with which Napoleon brushed aside the pedigree constructed for him: his nobility dated from Millesimo and Montenotte, "he would have nothing to do with such tomfoolery."

The dignity she attained in her family before her husband died was partly due to the prestige the Corsican accorded the mother. Lucien followed Joseph and Napoleon, then Elisa, Louis, Pauline, Caroline, and Jerome; thirteen children were born to her. Her prerogatives Bonaparte recognized by leaving the management of the household entirely to her. His mother, who lived with them, relinquished her right to give advice and determined to hear a mass for each child every day. The Signora smiled ironically—"one would think she was having the children." And in the end the old

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lady would have to live in the Cathedral, saying eight masses for her grandchildren and one for the salvation of her own soul.

Schemes came flowing unceasingly from Bonaparte for their sudden enrichment. There were projects for repayment at the State's expense, projects innumerable—nursery gardens he must supervise, administrative work he must direct, salt mines he must manage. Mails to France went heavy with his petitions—commanding if he could advance a single right, pleading with dignified humility if his claims were particularly brazen. For years Ajaccio was entertained by a law-suit with the Jesuits over his property in the city.

The loss of Paoli necessitated a volte face if Bonaparte were still to indulge his foible for the companionship of the mighty. "I was a true patriot and faithful adherent of Paoli as long as the National Guard existed. It has been abolished and now we are Frenchmen. Long

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live the King." Brandishing this declaration he went in pursuit of the French Governor, the Comte de Marboeuf, and the sweets of reconciliation. He had allegiance to offer; the French, wealth and position, and institutions for the succour of distressed noblemen. He pursued the Governor closely, gracefully, and thoroughly; invited him to stand sponsor to the latest baby, hung his portrait in the salon; he wrote sonnets to him.

The Governor readily accepted the homage of one of Paoli's chiefest supporters. The sonnets, indeed, had little quality: Gregorovius refused to reproduce them because "every Italian should be able to write a graceful sonnet." In fact the mania of the whole family for writing bad verses always perplexed Napoleon. "*Il faut avoir le diable au corps*" he would mutter.

The Governor was not appalled. He befriended the family; they were useful and amusing. The Signora at his invitation induced

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several families to return from self-imposed exile on their mountain estates. Marboeuf visited her frequently. It had been Paoli's habit to pass his evenings in her salon at Corte, until the arrival of Joseph commanded her temporary withdrawal. Marboeuf spent much of his time at the Casa Buonaparte. He had enemies who swore he stayed too long.

These enemies were adherents of his disgruntled subordinate, the Vicomte Narbonne-Pelet. Why, they asked, this anxiety to help the Bonapartes? Why had he contrived the appointment of Carlo as King's Counsellor and as a member of the deputation to the King? Who was managing his children's education? Marbouef's nephew, the Bishop of Autun, had admitted Joseph as a free scholar to the High School there. Napoleon had been entered without paying a franc at the Military School of Brienne. Joseph Fesch sent to a seminary. And the Signora's aunt—positively allowed to die thinking she would be buried in the Cathe-

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dral vaults, among the holy ones. An exchange of privileges, of course—and Napoleon the token of the exchange.

The Governor's enemies were hitting wildly when they suggested this. Marboeuf was sixty, but as he was married a few years later his innocence cannot be claimed on this score. His acquaintance with Bonaparte, however, had hardly been opened when Napoleon was born. The children resembled each other in temperament and appearance. Letizia was thirty years younger than Marboeuf and practising confinements almost annually; there was less in her beauty to create passion than admiration. With her imagination quelled by the strenuous housewife and disciplined by the *dévoté*, the most ineffective romantic sally was incomprehensible to her. During the Consulate the faubourg St. Germain never noticed a glance of coquetry. The libellous court of the restored Bourbons never attempted to create a mistress of one so uncompromisingly a wife.

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For seven years Bonaparte rode and drove and sailed in search of his coup d'éclat—excursions to Italy, to Florence, and Rome; expeditions to France, Marseilles, and Versailles. His unsteady chase suggests the feverish desire to push his luck, to test the limits of his destiny, which drives his son, years later, to range hastily over Europe with his armies. In this casting all reserves on one scheme after another is foreshadowed the vast hazards of Napoleon, defeated, and staking hugely on a sudden transformation.

He relaxed with failure, neglected his business and even, it is said, fortified himself with wine to look straitly upon his affairs. Upon Letizia fell the whole responsibility of the home. She was careful in spending; the Archdeacon (who lived with them) saved with such rigour that all Ajaccio discussed the richness of his hoard.

A few months before the youngest child was born, Bonaparte's unrestfulness was half ex-

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plained by his falling ill; the old enterprise had for some time, however, been worn down to an occasional feeble and fretting attempt. The disease was checked when weakness and poverty detained him by the side of his wife, until he determined to consult a French specialist. To meet the expenses he was obliged to borrow twenty-five gold pieces from the Deputy Governor. They had never been so poor as they were now. The harvest had failed, all that could be raised on their estate at Milelli had been borrowed.

He left Ajaccio at the end of 1784, accompanied by Joseph and the young Abbé Fesch, too ill to travel alone. After a rough and harmful crossing he was forced to stop at Montpellier, where he was found to be suffering from cancer in the stomach. He was removed from the squalid little inn to the house of Madame de Permon, his wife's friend. Comfort called back his assurance and powers of entertainment. He amused the company

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with reminiscences of his life as a student in Pisa and Rome, of the War of Independence—recurring here to “his wonderful wife, so strong-minded, with such character.”

He was three months awaiting his death. The humbug moved out majestically. In his youth he had written blasphemous verses; now he could not have enough priests round him. In Montpellier they thought him a saint. A renunciatory wave in the direction of Ajaccio—he would not have the Signora know of his condition, nor leave her young children to come to him. Resounding sermons to Joseph. “My son, follow my example and trust in God. But avoid the errors of my youth.” A patient gesture towards Bienne . . . he wished he could have seen his dear Napoleon; his caresses would have soothed his last sufferings. Prophetic—he would make his way, Napoleon; but his father would never live to see it.

Joseph, kneeling by his bedside, heard him whisper “Napoleon.” On the evening of his

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death he broke into troubled murmurings: "Where is Napoleon?" He moved slightly. "Why doesn't he come here to defend his father with his big sword?"

*"Victime de douleurs d'estomac,"* Letizia states plainly, *"dont il se plaignait toujours, surtout après qu'il avait dîné."*

### THE BONAPARTE CHILDREN

THE Signora Letizia had decided to send Napoleon to a girls' school. She was alone with Bonaparte over their quiet dinner; Saveria had brought in more wine and hurried out over the red-tiled floor for the evening causerie and laughter at the well. . . . "He's terribly quarrelsome," Letizia said, "always fighting, scratching and biting." He ruled Joseph in spite of being two years younger; poor Joseph was cowed with his violence.

Bonaparte, relaxed in shadows and his great chair, was trailing a thoughtful arm to his wine-glass. "How old is he now?" "Only five."

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When she had paused at the nursery door that morning Letizia had been silenced by one of the revelations with which every child sometimes subdues his parents, bearing to them with strange carelessness the proofs of accomplished transition from infancy to childhood. She had listened to her children padding about the high, bare nursery, to the busy stillness encouraged by Joseph's disjointed directions to himself over his scribbling. Then with startling sharpness Napoleon's imperious demand: "Joseph, come here. Take this end while I tie the other." . . . Direct, authoritative, not petulant.

Camilla had spoiled him perhaps. Camilla, the iron-framed, laughing peasant, had taken him when the Signora was obliged to give up nursing him herself; and the house had surrendered to her and "her little one, her Nabulionello."

Quite possible—Bonaparte agreed that Camilla might have fostered all this arrogance,

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but then he had been disgracefully turbulent at his christening three years before. His sister Maria-Anna had been a month old at the time, and delicate, with only a few days to live. She and Napoleon were allowed by the Archdeacon to be christened at home. Did she remember how he refused to kneel when the priest approached him? Screaming "No! No!" with the water running over him, plunging in his sponsor's arms, hitting at him, kicking at the priest and everyone near.

Letizia also became reminiscent, quite without sentimentality. . . . Not a strong baby; she had feared often he would follow the others. Mightn't she herself have been over-indulgent because of his frailty? Now he would scarcely submit to whippings. He obeyed her, but he was too violent, without gentleness. His smile was beautiful, but no child should have that heavy, penetrating scowl of his; she was ashamed to call him her son. He might be softened by a few months in the girls' school.

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The girls were curious when the aggressive little boy came, with his stockings falling untidily down his small legs. His love hovered over almost all of them; descended upon a selected few, eventually settled exclusively on Giacominetta—a good-natured child, self-sufficient, and inured to every sort of affection. Napoleon wooed her in the playing-field. Jealous and derisive, the rest of the school gathered round until he arose with a stick and beat them off, put them shrieking to flight, some viciously bruised.

When the nuns complained, Napoleon was brought home, whipped and sent away to the Jesuits. Delighted with the amour, young Ajaccio created and cherished a sing-song gibe:

*“Napolione di mezza calzetta,  
Fa l' amore a Giacominetta.”*

This was the last of Letizia's experiments with her children's education. She had had

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none herself and the training of the elder children was arranged by Bonaparte, of the younger by Napoleon and Joseph. In this she accepted the judgment of others, but in her rule during the children's infancy she was more assertive. The patriarchal convention in Corsica of the indulgence of sons was not observed. Her children were never allowed to weep or whimper before her, however much Bonaparte might succumb in a flood of caresses at their tears. When Napoleon was only three years old she rolled him down a roadside bank, giving him a smack for accompanying her against her commands. It is the only glimpse we have of the strain of keeping on a diminishing income two large houses with two or three servants, and a noisy following of children.

But "although severe and impartial, and inflexible in correcting the wrong-doer, she is," according to Napoleon, "indulgent to the good." She strikes him when he clings to a Sunday all of levity and no mass, whips him for stealing

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fruit—on one occasion waiting for nearly two days until he comes within caning distance. When he enters on the serious phase of a boy's development, however, in which he will seclude himself for days to work at his studies, she gives him a little room in the front of the house, away from the noise of his brothers. She had not the common fear of mothers at this retirement.

A view of Letizia as the mother of a large family suffers from her pre-eminence as the mother of Napoleon. In reality she insisted on "treating all alike, loving best the most unhappy." Moreover, the simplicity of her relations with the gargantuan infant is often lost under the gorgeous legends and portentous trifles with which it has been decorated by the early Bonapartists. A story which has more value than most is that which presents him munching the hard soldiers' bread in the streets of Ajaccio. The Signora's friends bring the tale to her, on which he explains that he ex-

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changes for soldiers' bread every morning the wheaten bread intended for his lunch. "If he is to be a soldier himself he must accustom himself to it."

Mass clashes with the children's meals, the claims of religion conflict with those of motherhood. Letizia considers the question with her ineluctable scrupulousness. In her *Mémoires* she gives her decision more space and importance than any stage in her companionship of her son's colossal career. . . . "Her presence in the home was necessary to keep the children in check in their early years. She knew that true Christianity required them to go to church every day, certainly never to neglect a festival. But she did not believe the Church would insist that people who were guiding important affairs or mothers of families should thus interrupt the regular course of their work."

Napoleon was nine years old when he and Joseph were sent to school in France. His

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poverty, his piety, and his provincial accent drew upon him humiliations which helped to provoke a severe and prolonged bout of homesickness. The reserve and silence with which he met them were probably acquired from his mother, as well as the consolation of the little Italian prayers she had taught him. The only collapse occurs at the end of the first year, when a pitiful, inflamed letter comes storming over to Corsica. His father must take him away. He couldn't support him properly at the school. The mockery of his poverty was too much; he would bear it no longer. His father must take him away from this place, "though there is not a single individual here who is not inferior to me in the noble feelings which exalt my soul."

Letizia opens the letter in Bonaparte's absence and is horrified. What humiliation for his father had he seen it! He was the child she cherished most of all, but another letter of that kind and she would have nothing more to do with Napoleon. Still, she softens into

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affectionate advice and a gift of thirty francs.

Soon after, when she can leave her last baby, Maria Paoletta, she breaks the long separation with a visit to France. Wherever she appears she is the "lovely Corsican," although when she overhears it she admonishes gravely: "Those of her countrywomen who deserved to be thought beautiful were still in Corsica." To the starving Napoleon she is "*belle comme les amours*." He never forgets. He walks into the reception-room at Brienne—grave, pale, and thin. The Signora refuses to recognize him as her son; laughing nervously, dismayed, she declares him a changeling.

"And I was really much altered," Napoleon explains afterwards. "I had been spending all my recreation time in work and my nights were taken up in poring over my studies."

Before she leaves, Letizia is utterly reassured. She is in the chaise, waiting while the driver settles his reins. "*Il y a là*," she affirms suddenly, "*un génie divin*."

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### THE FLIGHT FROM CORSICA

THE Signora placed all her resources at Napoleon's service. Her house was thrown open to his party, her table was always spread, and mattresses were put down on the floor of every chamber to give night quarters to adherents. Napoleon was making speeches at the clubs, writing addresses, riding into the country to canvass for his election as an officer of the newly-formed National Guard. An unscrupulous, furious affair, the election. Napoleon was wrought up to an impossible pitch, sleepless, vehement—he advanced more coolly on the Consulate and the Empire than towards the rank of major in the National Guard.

The Signora's house was barricaded; half her money had been spent. She came sorrowfully to Napoleon—she must either sell her property or borrow.

Napoleon flung his arm out impatiently.

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"It's not poverty I fear"—low-voiced—"but shame."

He embraced her quickly. She mustn't be depressed, but they couldn't turn back now. They had gone too far. . . . Only ten days more. Once promoted, his future was assured. But he would not have her depressed or her health would suffer.

Eight years before Letizia had been left a widow of nearly forty. She had had many children and was still beautiful, but she did not marry again; she worked without respite. Napoleon has said: "She was compelled to take the guidance of affairs into her own hands, and the burden was not beyond her strength. She looked after everything, and made every arrangement with a prudence and foresight hardly to be expected in her sex and at her age." The omniscient Napoleon can describe her mastery in household government in terms no less vague than these.

"She had the head of a man on the body of

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a woman." She brought them through six years of scarcity. Napoleon complained that she had not returned sixteen francs he had lent her when the money for postage of his parcels had to be sent by him. Until a persistent sore on her finger forced her to employ a seamstress, she made all the children's clothes herself.

Marboeuf had obtained a small widow's pension for her. The lawsuit with the Jesuits closed at last, with the decision in the family's favour, and the Archdeacon relieved them, by his death and a legacy, of the prospect of penury and the discomforts of looking after a gout-stricken inmate. In dying, too, he had made the promise of Napoleon required by convention and biography: "Napoleon will become the head of the family, for he will be a great man."

The Casa Buonaparte was crowded with armed adherents. They went forth at night to abduct the Commissioner in charge of the elec-

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tions from the house of the Peraldi, their opponents. At the election there were blows and insults in the Church of San Francesco, and the chairman, a Pozzo di Borgo, was pulled from his seat.

Napoleon was appointed second in command of one of the battalions.

Street fights occurred at Easter between his troops and the townspeople. The Bonapartes, the di Borgo and Peraldi were struggling fiercely and silently beneath Paoli's ancient nose.

Except at election times Letizia would sit apart with her daughters in feminine unconcern at her sons' intrigues. When Joseph or Napoleon came in for a hasty dinner she would advise briefly and sagely, at which Napoleon would kick away his chair and embrace her in admiration. "Her judgment was so sound, she was never mistaken; her counsel and experience were priceless." If they required her help she would give it carefully; she would welcome their followers to the house and allow them to

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entertain themselves. But, unrequired, she would work the days away in the large morning-room, knitting and embroidering. Her daughters conversed at her side, usually of toilettes, for they had departed from the simplicity of the national dress. The Signora still wore the long black gown, with the close-fitting bodice and skirt in one piece, and an embroidered chemisette covering her neck and bosom. Elisa, who had been to Saint Cyr, returned to instruct and *épater* her provincial sisters. The Signora would sometimes mildly reprove their lightness and absence of plain conscientiousness. Had they no desire to become industrious wives and good mothers? But she was too wise to be anxious and too stoical not to accept the limitations of her influence.

Napoleon openly dissociated himself from Paoli. His battalion commander in the Sardinian expedition had been Colonna, a close friend of the President. To him Napoleon had gone weeping with rage at their retreat. "Impu-

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dence!" Colonna had answered; and Napoleon had flown off, girding impotently with a remark which has been euphemistically translated by the historian: "He is a horse for parade, no more."

Paoli could not leave Joseph and Napoleon to engineer at a distance, and demanded that they should present themselves before him immediately. He sent the command by Lucien, their brother, who lived with him as his secretary in the old monastery in the mountains at Rostino. "You are to come back with them," Paoli ordered.

The gates of Ajaccio were closed when Lucien arrived. He heard the beat of a drum; the fusillades of the National Guard at musketry practice apprised him of the city's bellicose changes. They would not admit him until Citizen Joseph and Captain Napoleon had given permission. Joseph had come to meet him; he took his arm on the way to their home.

The Signora Letizia was sewing, surrounded by her daughters and younger sons. Louis

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scribbled alone in the corner of the room. Elisa sat by her mother's chair. Napoleon awaited him sitting on the window-seat. Annunciata, his youngest sister, was on his knee playing with the charms on his watch-chain.

The Signora received his kiss. "So—at last. That magician Paoli—I was afraid he would never let you come back to us."

". . . It was the General who sent me."

"Ah! Ah!"—Napoleon rose and came nearer.

Joseph signed Lucien to silence. "Maman, wouldn't it be better if the children went out?"

"Marianne, go and take the others with you."

Marianne Elisa was annoyed, but made a fine French curtsey to the Signora, to Joseph and Napoleon, and led the children out.

Lucien told them of Paoli's plan to break the rule of the French. The Signora thought it folly. "He won't succeed. It was all very well before, when he had the townsmen with him.

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The bourgeois care nothing for independence now."

There were plans for another *levée en masse*, Lucien went on. He hesitated—"And Paoli has said he will spare no one who opposes him—not even the sons of Charles."

Joseph and Napoleon started as at the sting of a tarantula. "He said that?" "Parbleu, that's a little too much." "What! He said that." All three, the Signora as well, were on their feet and walking about the room.

"We shall see." The anger in Napoleon's voice silenced the others. "Friend Pasquale has not got me yet. He, declare war on us? Very well, the idea of war doesn't appal me."

"War?" The Signora shrugged her shoulders. "What are you going to make war with? Tell me that, Napoleon. You know well that even with equal numbers—which we have not—one mountaineer is worth four of the others. If they were with us I should be as ready as you are to fight. But it's very differ-

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ent. . . . I tell you frankly that unless the fleet with the troops comes quickly, and very quickly, we can't resist. The least we should risk would be capture."

Napoleon persisted that he and Joseph should fight. Their mother and the children could be put on board a coral-fisher.

She would not embark, the Signora, until the last extremity.

For another hour they argued, this emphatic family. The Signora told Lucien to lie down and rest until supper-time.

"It's a pity you can't go to the Société Populaire tonight. You must certainly come tomorrow."

"What do you say? Tomorrow? But, my dear brother, I must go back to Paoli tomorrow."

"Are you mad?" The Signora turned as she was leaving the room. "This time he wouldn't let you come back. Did you promise to go back?"

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"But there was no occasion to promise. Neither Paoli nor I had any doubt of it."

"So much the better." The Signora would not have it that it was the same as a promise when Paoli considered a promise unnecessary. And if he had promised—promised—he hadn't the right to do so. Because, since—well—anyhow, he was a minor and couldn't engage himself without her consent.

But that was dreadful: Lucien became dramatic. It would be said he had betrayed Paoli, called *vittolo* all over the island.

"What folly!" The Signora had a concise formula for all theatricality.

At supper they were given reason to doubt that Napoleon's desertion of Paoli, with his English leanings, was caused by an affection for France. Napoleon ate quickly and talked abruptly. England? There was the country in which to make a fortune. If he could not have the promotion he expected from France he wouldn't object to seeking service there. The

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English thought highly of good artillery officers; they were rare in India. If he went to India they would all hear about him; in a few years have him back a nabob with fortunes for his sisters' dowries.

The Signora disliked this concern with India—the climate, the distance. . . .

They rose from the table and returned to the talk of Paoli. Lucien met with miserable silence the assurances of the Signora and Joseph that loyalty to his family was his first duty. Joseph brought paper and pen, and though Lucien sobbed and protested the letter was composed, regretting very respectfully that he was required by his family.

Lucien left the island a few weeks later with Sémonville, the Convention's representative who had danced with the girls and embraced the brothers' political schemes. Lucien acted as his secretary and loosed his wayward energies in the Jacobin club at Toulon. A copious, ungainly youth, small-headed and short-sighted,

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he disgusted colleagues with his perversity, disarmed them with a smile surprisingly attractive. He made a noisy, untimely denunciation of Paoli.

Napoleon attempted to fend off the island's wrath from his family by drafting the General's Apology. The Convention, however, cited Paoli before them, and Pozzo di Borgo with him (Napoleon's enemy in a lifelong feud and the "clever old Pozzo" who dined with Queen Victoria as a diplomatist in Russian service). The summons was defied. Five days after the execution of the King, Paoli was induced to declare the island independent.

The island rose with "*Evviva Paoli. Evviva la libertà*"; Ajaccio with "Vengeance and ruin to his enemies"—most loudly near the Casa Buonaparte. A young priest shot at Napoleon's head in the Place du Diamant.

The memory of the Corte evenings, twenty years before, overrode Paoli's dependence on di Borgo. He sent a message to Letizia:

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"Offer no resistance now; it will mean only destruction to yourself, your family, and your people." Ambrogini, an old friend of her husband, called at her house and saw her for a few minutes alone. If she disapproved of her sons' behaviour he would see that everything of hers would be left untouched.

Letizia's reply had energetic finality. "Tell Paoli I thought he knew me better. He must realize that my sons are acting by my advice; and I shall enforce it if necessary. I have declared myself a French subject and will remain one."

Pozzo di Borgo, in sleek black and his head cocked wickedly, fulminated from the branches of a tree near Corte. When the Consulta met they declared the family outlaw and ordered the confiscation of their property.

Napoleon, having failed to force the citadel of Ajaccio, was surrounded with only fifty men under him and horseflesh to feed on, until shepherds found him a way out. He waited in hid-

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ing in a cavern near the chapel of the Greeks, and embarked for Bastia.

Letizia hoped to protect her property by remaining in Ajaccio. The streets were dangerous, and the entrance to her house was guarded by friends. The Paolists grew bolder when the French fleet did not appear. The dénouement descended suddenly and in the night. She awoke to find her room blazing with light of pine torches and crowded with mountaineers; she was sleeping fully dressed. Costa Bastelica, her sons' friend, was shaking her—"Quick, Signora. The Paolists."

With her children half asleep and upset by interrupted rest she hurried through the city's shadows, where only the roaming dogs moved. The Paolists had not entered the city yet. The scent of the maquis welcomed them to the open. They lay concealed when the troops hastened by.

The children were weakly tearful. Even Elisa wept; her feet bleeding, her thin frock

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and shoes torn. The *belle laide* of Saint Cyr, the admired of Admiral Truguet, yielded herself to the Signora's consolations.

"Don't cry, my child. Do as I do." Putting a gentle arm about her: "Suffer and be silent."

A shepherd behind broke in: "Signora. Your house!"

The party turned and halted mechanically at the glow above Ajaccio; the Casa Buonaparte was in flames.

They came to Milelli, their country-house, soon after daybreak, and left after a short breakfast. They wandered along the coast, expecting Napoleon to pick them up, and slept for two nights in the maquis.

Napoleon had landed near the city and sent shepherds out for them, staying himself on a hillock near the shore. In the morning a shepherd ran in breathless—the Paolists were close, searching for the Signora.

The fire from his xebec kept them off until he was taken on board. The same day he saw

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signals from the coast and sailed in to find the Signora and her children.

Jerome and Annunciata were brought from the relatives on whom they had been imposed in Ajaccio, and the whole family embarked for France.

## *Chapter II*

### EXILED

DURING the crossing the three vigorous young girls and the robust little boy wondered excitedly at the future France held for them. When they turned for confirmation to the Signora she hoped they would be compensated for their losses and sacrifice. But she met Lucien painfully at Toulon: "We are ruined for many years at least." Lucien felt the reproach; for their débâcle had been precipitated by his premature outburst against Paoli. They had saved nothing, neither money nor plate; their papers were burnt and property confiscated. They had no clothes but those they wore.

Letizia suffered most. The children had heard from her of the "terrible times" after

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her husband's death. Her memories of anxieties then sat heavily on her. Napoleon believed she had never been able to free her mind entirely from them.

They went to La Valette, a country village near Toulon, to live as cheaply as possible, but even La Valette could not provide for the penurious. One straw sack they had to lie upon, and a broken pot in which to cook vegetables. They left for Bandol, where a peasant sheltered them for a few weeks until they came to Marseilles. Here they were allowed to live in the empty house of a guillotined nobleman, in a few rooms on the fourth floor; then in underground lodgings in the rue Lafont, which the Terror had also emptied. Letizia closed her mind, working and waiting until they should have struggled to their former footing; it would be long, of course. Her younger children rose in high recklessness at the escape from old restrictions and repressions. They were no longer hungry, the Commandant having or-

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dered soldiers' rations to be served them; and Napoleon had begun to help them from his little pay as artillery captain.

Letizia suffered most. After fifty years in the island, she found herself among a people whose language she could hardly speak. She had been prosperous where she was now penniless, respected where now ignored. The Signora of momentary gaiety and sudden friendliness entirely disappeared and did not return in prosperity. In a few years her sons had grown beyond her influence, were married to wives she disliked, or ruled by customs she did not understand. Within a few months her daughters could no more be her companions. A few household duties would not confine them, and the Signora was unable to bind them with amusement. She was poor and uneducated, retiring; she could not hold them. France could not content her; Ajaccio would see her again, but her sons would bring her away, though she wept at leaving her friends there, and mourned

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her uprooting from the home which held her youth. Yet they could never persuade her to have friends or servants who were not Corsicans, nor to give offices to others than her compatriots.

They recovered slowly at first. Joseph obtained the assistance given to patriotic refugees, and Lucien, work at a mill in St. Maximin. Napoleon took Louis with him as his aide-de-camp to his regiment at Nice. Jerome, who had been running with the urchins about the streets of Marseilles, was retrieved and sent to school. A year after coming they made a quick advance towards rehabilitation with the friendship of the opulent Clarys. The origin of this bourgeois family had not sufficiently assured them of safety from the Terrorists, to prevent a son drowning himself in a well from fright at the guillotine. The Bonapartes were immaculately bred, their birth without plebeian stain. Joseph had a petty influence among the Jacobins, yet could introduce himself as the

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Comte de Bonaparte. An alliance need cost the Clarys neither their heads by the guillotine nor "face" in the parlours of the bourgeoisie.

Joseph had comforted Desirée, a pretty, silly brunette of fourteen, when he found her awaking from a siesta in the Maison Commune, forgotten and scared. The acquaintance was one to pursue, and within a few weeks it was arranged that they should marry after two years. Joseph brought Napoleon to the house, on leave and seeking a wife instead of fugitive promotion—a wife with whom he could settle down on a country estate. Among a crowd of sisters was Julie, a little older than himself—Julie thick-nosed, sincere, devoted to religion and Joseph. Napoleon cast his eyes from her to Desirée. . . . Decidedly Joseph had made a mistake. He and Desirée were not in the least suited, to each other. "In a well-conducted household one must yield to the other. You, Joseph, are vacillating, Desirée the same; Julie and I know what we want. Therefore you had

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much better marry Julie. As to Desirée"—pulling her on his knee—"she shall be my wife."

The Signora called on Madame Clary the next day, proposing the change and the immediate marriage of Joseph and Julie. She was already fond of the kindly, harmless old Frenchwoman. Some of the brothers grumbled—one would have thought one Corsican in the family enough; but they were herded into approval by these effective Corsicans.

The Bonaparte sisters accorded Julie immediate popularity; she had a dowry of a million and a half francs.

Before the marriage Letizia fled from Marseilles with her daughters. They had grown beyond her, moved freely—much too freely Marseilles thought—where Letizia could not accommodate herself. They had changed their names or gallicized them. In their home French had ousted the island dialect, and they openly kissed the rackety young classical Re-

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publicans who haunted them. Elisa, clever and malicious, had artistic pretensions; Pauline no pretensions at all except to the beauty of Helen of Troy. In Corsica, even Caroline—imperious and independent—would not have *tutoyer*-ed her brothers.

The Signora attempted to arrange a match between Pauline and dè Lasalcette, a sober, wealthy young man of Dauphiné, but “the want of propriety in the family and the outrageous flirtations of Pauline so disgusted him that he withdrew.” Junot, less fastidious, asked Napoleon if he might marry her: “No; he had only his lieutenant’s shoulder-strap and Pauline hadn’t even that.”

Barras and Fréron, representatives of the Convention, came to the rue Lafont. Here they found respite from waving to prisoners an elegant dismissal by the guillotine, but not from a practice of seduction. A grim and inimical Signora drove the intrigues into the streets. Each morning Fréron would meet the girls,

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proud-limbed in shabby dresses, bringing back from the market the baskets of vegetables as Pompadour might have carried her bouquet. Letizia wrote anxiously to Napoleon, who was at the siege of Toulon. Fréron was beginning to push his wishes for the exclusive enjoyment of Pauline's beauty. He must not be offended; it was to his influence they owed their pension.

Toulon fell; Napoleon was appointed général de brigade and Inspector of the Coasts. He bought a house at Antibes, and Letizia hurried her daughters there. But every cabaret in Marseilles had by this time its uproarious tale of their intrigues; Napoleon is said to have always had a grudge against the place. As he himself found that "it was always a pitched battle to bring chits of girls of his own family to reason," it is not surprising the Signora had difficulty. But she realized when finally she refused to give Pauline in marriage to Fréron that they required some sort of indulgence. She opened a salon—a small room, roughly

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furnished, noisy with strong young officers in their patched uniforms and lively girls in oddments of finery. Literary Elisa read aloud to them. Little comedies were acted between two screens in the glimmer of a single tallow candle; Pauline a soubrette and the strong young officers stage-managers. The Signora preferred the little comedies and so, one assumes, did the strong young officers.

Lucien had married Catherine Boyer, the daughter of an innkeeper. An extravagant speech in the Jacobin club had roused old Boyer. . . . "He had talked very prettily of equality, but if they were all of the same rank why didn't he marry his daughter? He paid court to her. It wasn't fair." Lucien had Napoleon's decision in an inverted form. Love, Catherine, and Boyer routed him. The attempted coercion of his family and Napoleon's decree against the match rooted him in mulish resistance. Boyer was aggrieved, Catherine mutely appealed; his family opposed the

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union; Napoleon forbade it. He was married.

The girl accepted without question the superiority of her sisters-in-law. Her modesty and good-nature made it impossible to wound her. The family allowed her careless membership.

They were astonished about a year later by Napoleon's announcing his marriage to Josephine. He had warned none of his brothers. Lucien, who had been found a post in the commissariat and hurried out of Paris, remembered for the Signora that Josephine was hardly to be noticed in a circle of pretty women, generally reputed to be of easy morals. With little, very little wit, she had no trace of what could be called beauty. . . . Her face was without natural freshness, but the artifices of toilet remedied this defect. He discovered elsewhere what he called "certain Creole characteristics in the pliant undulations of her figure" and provocation in her *retroussé* nose.

She was at least six years older than Na-

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poleon and had two children. A licentious woman, the scandalized sisters hinted—she had been the mistress of Barras and belonged to Madame Tallien's set. Hopelessly extravagant, said Joseph.

Desirée, whom Letizia had made her daughter, had waited with her in disappointed tears for Napoleon's letters.

She listened to her children, and returned heavily—"She will not make him happy."

### *Chapter III*

## L'AVÈNEMENT DE BONAPARTE

### LETIZIA AND THE RISE OF NAPOLEON

NAPOLEON rode from the villa to meet her, a few officers clattering behind him down the long Italian avenue to the high road. Letizia's coach halted—"Napoleon."

She had not seen him for a year—and he had since been acclaimed as the victor of Arcola and Rivoli.

The Signora had not unfolded so delightedly for years. She was smiling, declaring herself the happiest of mothers—but he was thin . . . the twelve months had been passed in the saddle and generally without Josephine. . . . He was killing himself.

On the contrary, it seemed to him that he was living at last.

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"You will live in the future rather."

He laughed as she stepped back into her coach to drive on with him: "Well, Signora, and would that be to die?"

She had welcomed him with the same "extraordinary pleasure" on his first being appointed Commander of the Army of Italy. "He would make himself known, she was sure. The old Archdeacon had said so, and that he would become head of the family. . . . How anxiously she would wait for the results of it all. God and the Holy Virgin would protect him."

She was intensely proud of him with a sensible absence of exaggeration and wonder. But the Corsican refugee who had cooked her vegetables in a broken pot and could not converse in French had become masterful with hesitant officers. The armistice had ended when she reached Genoa on her journey to Milan, and travelling was dangerous. As she would not wait, a guard had been offered. "No, there

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was nothing to fear. Her son had hostages in captivity belonging to the highest families. Let them go on and tell him she was coming, to-morrow she would continue herself."

She secured his pardon for Elisa, who had surreptitiously married Félix Bacciochi—a middle-aged little Corsican, who consoled himself for insignificance with his violin. Napoleon had their union blessed by the Church, and at the same time married Pauline to General Leclerc.

Within a month Letizia had celebrated her family's rise with a triumphant return to Corsica—her son the commander of the Army of Italy, Joseph an ambassador at Rome, Lucien head of the commissary, Louis a captain in the cavalry, and two girls married and endowed. She accompanied Elisa and her husband, for whom Napoleon had procured the rank of General and the office of commandant of the citadel of Ajaccio.

She worked with intense energy to repair the

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Casa Buonaparte, until she fell ill, was prostrate for weeks, and thereafter went to pray frequently in the Cathedral against another relapse into pride. She lived simply, and still with her old servant Saveria.

From Ajaccio she wrote to Madame Clary about their acquaintance, her consecrated son, and eight rolls of wall-paper with a bright red border and roses; moving stiltedly through elaborate acknowledgments and leaping sharply down to an energetic talk of household details. . . . "She has received with great pleasure the repeated assurances of her attachment and friendship towards her and the General. Her devotion was nothing new to one who had on so many occasions received substantial proofs of her love, and she begged her to accept her expressions of gratitude. Pray God would protect the man who had consecrated his life not so much to the happiness of his family as to the welfare of the whole of France. Captain Bastelica had brought . . . the carriage

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and the small hexagons for the floor. . . . She had not found as many of these as she had expected." . . . Enclosing designs for doorsteps (she had sufficient lime) ; notifying her she was sending a sack of their island chestnuts.

Letizia was half conscious that the salon was held by a common curiosity. The conversation ebbed constantly, and was strenuously renewed; there were glances towards her. Elisa sailed anxiously up to her: "Mother . . . they say Napoleon has been killed on the Nile."

The Signora was startled, but confident; the whole salon heard her reply: "My son will never delight his enemies by dying miserably in Egypt. I know he'll be spared for more and greater undertakings."

Lucien had been sent as the Corsican deputy to the Council of the Five Hundred, and he with Joseph, wished to have her with them in Paris. Joseph Fesch came to bring her. "We shall see you again, Signora," her friends said

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when she left after weeks' delay, weeping and embracing them to the ship's side. But though she lived nearly forty years longer, they were wrong.

Napoleon had returned and was at St. Cloud furiously pulling the supports from underneath the Directory—missing fire with a speech in the Council of the Ancients and blundering into the Orangerie where the Five Hundred rose at him with imprecations and blows. Bourrienne, his secretary, was tugging at his arm: "Come away, General, you don't know what you're saying." His guard dragged him out. Lucien called in the troops to restore order. Bonaparte was beating a path to supremacy.

Madame de Permon and her daughter Laure waited with Signora, held by the sympathetic curiosity women have for each other in ordeal and crisis. It was Madame de Permon who had received Carlo Bonaparte's death-bed thanks and a proposal of marriage from

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Napoleon. Lucien's messages on the first day of the coup d'état reassured them a little. The following afternoon found Paris lapsed into stillness and the Signora unenlightened—the next hours held news of Napoleon's execution or victorious brigandage. She and Pauline decided to drive to Panoria de Permon again, surprising her because she had not gone to Josephine.

"But Panoria, I couldn't go there to have my mind set at rest. It would be the last place. I want to see my other sons happy with their wives, but with her—No!" The strain was shaken out in sobbing; she grieved over Napoleon's marriage in the old Corsican patois.

Laure was listening quietly. Pauline had seated herself before a large mirror, and arranged and rearranged the folds of her gown and the cashmere shawl she had thrown over her shoulders.

The Signora recovered herself, and they talked for hours of Corsica and her husband's

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death fourteen years before. Her anxiety had time to rise again. Seven o'clock and no news; her uneasiness became so painful to Madame de Permon that she suggested a visit to the Fey-deau Theatre.

They were playing *L' Auteur dans son Ménage*. The Signora shuddered at every unexpected sound; her eyes turned continually towards the door of their box. The play was finished; there was no conversation during the interval which separated it from the second piece. From the pit there came the noise of a disturbance, and the Signora was on her feet at once. A thief had been captured. The curtain rose, and the next play dragged on . . . the dialogue stopped, the actors withdrew from the centre of the stage and waited. One of them came forward—"Citizens, there has been a Revolution at St. Cloud. General Bonaparte has escaped the daggers of Arena and his accomplices. Several representatives have been arrested."

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Pauline's shriek tore through the cheering theatre and drew every eye upon them. She fell into hysterical sobbing. The Signora was pale as marble; a glass of water brought for Pauline trembled violently in her hand. But "Paulette," she whispered severely, "what is all this noise for? Quiet. Nothing has happened to Napoleon. Get up. We must find out everything. . . ."

Half-past nine. The Signora had dismissed her own carriage. They waited in the vestibule; listening to the shut-in laughter of the audience. Many were leaving.

Madame de Permon's footman appeared; their carriage was outside. Madame asked the Signora where she would go.

"To the rue Chantereine."

Now that it was all finished they could go to Josephine for reliable news. The Signora was living at the rue du Rocher with Joseph, but he would not be at home and Julie would know nothing.

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"If we went to the rue Verte?"—suggested Laure.

"It would be useless. Lucien cannot have informed Christine of anything, and we might frighten her. No, no—rue Chantereine."

It was impossible to get near Josephine's house. The cold and dark November street was tumultuous with shouting and swearing coachmen, horsemen galloping up and thrusting their way through the crowds and among people who cried for news. Every horseman shook his head when accosted. De Rastignac, an habitu   of the Permons' salon, recognized their carriage, but not Madame's companions. He struggled to them—"Eh bien. *Voil   de la belle besogne!* Your friend Lucien, Mademoiselle Laure, has just made a king of his brother the corporal."

Laure held up her hand warningly. He looked inside, at the Signora and Pauline, whom he saw often at the salon of Madame de Permon, and ran away.

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They had moved nearer the courtyard. An officer rode in; by the light from the hall Laure saw him to be her brother-in-law, de Geouffre.

"It's all right," he called out to them. "It's all over. There is to be a Consulate. Two will be members of the Directory, the third General Bonaparte."

"That's a pike who will eat up the other two," said Madame de Permon.

"Oh, Panoria!"

### THE BONAPARTE DISSENSIONS

"If you wished to please the Signora you had only to talk in praise of her children." She appeared to the Consulate society "rather cold, but warming marvellously when conversation turned upon her children." "She was easy to live with, easily satisfied," content to dine irregularly when there were excursions and delighted to hear about them if she did not join. "Amiable, unpretentious, she was more than simple in her dress." For a visit of ten or

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twelve days to Pauline in the country she brought a single gown, and that of common summer material.

She belonged to the effective rather than the attractive type found in people who receive a large access of fortune. At a sudden torrent of wealth she gathered the good things together and secured them instead of handing them about in all directions. When Pauline derided her meanness she would answer: "Wasteful child. . . . I must save for your brothers. I will never allow Bonaparte to have it in his power to complain that I have devoured his substance. You abuse his generosity."

Napoleon never *tutoyer*-ed his elder brother—so much remained of his Corsican regard for the *droits d' aînesse*. But he had disturbed the family by arrogating its rule to himself, and the Signora could not at first adapt herself. She would not favour such a disarrangement—Joseph deprived of his birthright and governed by a younger brother. Her equanimity was

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shaken by the family embroilments, and little resistances and occasions of strife depressed her. She remembered the ruin of one of Joseph's showy fêtes at Mortefontaine. Joseph had hurried her in to dinner to place her on his right hand. Josephine would have sat on his left, although Napoleon had commanded that she must take precedence of her mother-in-law. Napoleon had started up, seized his wife's arm, and flinging past those already entering, taken the head of the table with her. Guests had sat down anywhere and in constraint. Napoleon had refused to speak to any of his family.

She was convinced that the attacks on Lucien, the carmagnoles of Jacobins he had suppressed, were directed by Fouché, the Minister of Police. She drove to the Tuileries to demand his punishment. Josephine remained with Napoleon when she was announced, for Fouché was her protégé. A violent debating; the Signora was fighting white, Josephine beaten to weeping. As the Signora left she begged her

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daughter-in-law to "tell her friend Fouché she believed her arm long enough to make any man rue the day in which he had dared to slander her sons." Napoleon came with her to the carriage: "It was evident she hadn't been reading the English papers. They spoke with calumny not only of her darling Lucien, but the whole of the Bonapartes." "That is possible, but I am powerless to prevent the English papers. With Fouché it's a different matter."

Lucien had angered Napoleon with his obstructions and astonished everyone by issuing to the Consul dictates of sublime impudence. He headed the family in their jealousy of Josephine, and in the vendetta which had developed from Josephine's insulting avoidance of *Marseilles* after her marriage. Josephine also had enraged Pauline by venturing into her affair with Fréron and upholding his dismissal. She had disgusted the Signora with her lapdogs (one of them had bitten Napoleon's calf in the bridal bed), her extravagance and her sterility.

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The family were worrying out her liaisons when Bonaparte made his sudden return from Egypt. They prepared to beset him with their clamour for divorce. Josephine hoped to forestall them by riding out with Louis to meet him, but she chose the wrong road. The family were amazed at their fortune. The Signora and Joseph found a betrayed husband storming through an empty house. "Everything was finished between them. She would not set foot in his house again. Forgive her? Never."

. . . "But what could I do?" At the reconciliation the Signora was depressed by the "domination of a strange family over her own."

Lucien had advised Napoleon to marry the Infanta, and paraded Paris with circus-like grandeur on a fortune made in Spain. He finally infuriated his brother by marrying Madame Joubberthou, "a lady distinguished for her gallantries" in fulfilment of his threat to ally himself to a woman of bad reputation, if Napoleon refused him the Queen of Etruria.

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Napoleon would not acknowledge "widow Joubberthou," and forbade the family to call on her.

When the Signora attempted to pacify him she was blamed for showing an unjust preference for Lucien.

"My love is always deepest for the most unhappy."

He complained angrily of disputes and disobedience. "*Enfin*, Madame, do you want there to be a tragedy between your sons?"

"Be prudent," she told Lucien, "and the Consul will receive you. He is well aware he had no right to require you to marry to please him. He didn't consult your taste, not even mine."

But Lucien was forced to leave France. He promised his mother he would wait through Easter eve until midnight for the message which might recall him.

The Signora would not hold to this hope: "No, Napoleon will never allow him to remain.

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He doesn't wish to have him near." Lucien had not the tractable mediocrity which the Consul was beginning to exact from relatives and subordinates.

Four travelling coaches were prepared and loaded in the courtyard. The horses were ordered to be harnessed at daybreak. While Joseph and Lucien paced a regretful gallery, the Signora and Alexandrine Joubberthou folded shawls on a little sofa near the fire and handed them to Sophie, who shed the tears of a ladies' maid over her adieu to Paris.

The brothers stopped to count the eleven strokes of the clock on the chimneypiece.

The Signora took Joseph's hand and held it tensely. Her voice was thick with tears: "Come, my sons, it is time to separate."

"Lucien will let me stay until midnight, maman."

Half an hour later Joseph broke into the Signora's tired silence: "The Consul does not go to bed until twelve. I might go back

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and ask him for another letter for Lucien."

"Shall I go and see the Consul, maman?"  
He asked three times before she answered.

She stood up. "Yes, go. You, his eldest brother, go and beg him to let Lucien stay. And he will answer you as he answered me—yes, even his Josephine—"Those who grieve at his departure may go with him.'" She spoke excitedly—"Yes, I will go too. Not with you, Lucien, but after. I will spare him the irritation of seeing how persistently I cling to you."

Alexandrine drew her down to the sofa in tears.

"Suppose you go yourself before he goes to bed," Joseph pleaded with Lucien, "and ask to speak to him before you set off. . . . Tell him you don't wish to separate on bad terms."

Lucien took his mother's hand and kissed it. He was sitting at her feet. "Am I to go and tell him that, *ma bonne mère*?"

"No, you oughtn't. It would be perfectly

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useless. . . . I would rather you left now without seeing him."

At midnight Lucien knelt with his wife before her. "Till we meet again in Rome—as soon as possible," and she left them to go to the sleeping children.

## *Chapter IV*

### MADAME MÈRE

THE Baron Desmousseaux was on his way to dine with Cambacérès in the rue St. Dominique. His coachman having driven into an ill-lighted courtyard, followed the servants who opened the carriage door. They climbed the wide staircase and entered the high salon. Sitting by the fire were two women, alone, plain and unremarkable. One of them, Madame de Fleuriu, rose as he was announced. The other did not move, except to turn a straight, dark glance upon him.

The Baron bowed slightly and came to the fire, where he stood warming one foot after the other. "What the devil is the old fool about?" he muttered, loudly enough to be

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heard. "His watch must surely have stopped."

Madame de Fleurieu was about to speak to him when he advanced towards her. "I was afraid I was late, but I see His Excellency is not here, nor most of the guests arrived. So dinner will not be ready yet."

"What are you speaking of, monsieur?" Madame de Fleurieu asked him. "Who are you? And where do you suppose you are?"

"I am the Baron Desmousseaux, préfet of the Haute Garonne. Isn't this the palace of Prince Cambacérès?"

"No, monsieur, it isn't. You are not in the Archichancelier's house but in that of Madame Mère."

*"Mère de qui? Mère de quoi?"*

"I tell you, monsieur; again, this is the house of Madame the Emperor's mother, who desires you to retire, not being at this moment in the humour to accept your respectful compliments."

The Baron overflows into excuses which the Signora does not know how to accept.

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The encounter makes a piquant relation and accounts for his unpunctuality. The faubourg St. Germain embraces the anecdote and for weeks its laggards meet with the fashionable greeting: "Had he been to see Mistress the Mother of Whom? Of *What*?"

The execution of the Duc d'Enghien, it has been suggested, marked the beginning of a psychological change in Napoleon which amounted almost to an overbalancing of his intellect. The "horror" which Madame Mère felt then seems to support this. She was strangely moved and overwhelmed Napoleon with reproaches.

The echo rolls to Rome of the ponderous ceremony at Notre Dame, when her plump and strident son defiantly snatches his crown. The same fear, intangible to her, is hinted. "She is tormented by forebodings she will hardly confess to me," writes Lucien to Joseph; "the First Consul, she thinks, is making a mistake in

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assuming the crown of Louis XVI." She will commit herself only to an inadequate reason: there were far more friends to the Republic than Napoleon appeared to suspect. Her dread of the Emperor's assassination was not relieved until he fell.

Acts of clemency with which he introduced his reign comforted her. She was delighted that the Pope had poured the holy oil upon her son's head. "The Pope in Paris! *Est-ce, Dieu, possible?*" That was all: Napoleon was remote from her in his triumphs. The sumptuous music of imperial ceremony did not exalt her; she was unexcited and often depressed. She delayed her return from Rome. Napoleon had expected to welcome her in August, four months after the coronation, but there was no move until November. Cardinal Fesch brought word to Napoleon that she intended to spend the summer in Pisa, to take the waters at Lucca, and to stay a few weeks with Lucien at Frascati. The death of Madame Clary delayed her

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—and robbed her of a companion who had left a wealthy husband and seven children in France in order to be with her. But she waited in Italy chiefly because she hoped to bring about an agreement between Lucien and Napoleon: she could act more conveniently as an intermediary, and Napoleon might prefer to yield than to have his mother absent from Paris.

She may have resented the slowness in choosing her title while her daughters were styled princesses, but the choice was one which taxed Napoleon's ingenuity. It was impossible that her title should be created in the fashion adopted with her daughter and daughters-in-law, who might use their own names or their husbands' Christian names. To present her as Princess Letizia would cause her to be confused with her own daughters, or at least suggest an inappropriate juvenility. Under the Bourbons the title of Madame had been confined to the King's eldest daughter; it was decided this should be be-

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stowed on the Signora. Although even the fecundating properties of the waters of Plombières had failed with Josephine, provision had to be made for the claims of a daughter to the Emperor. Madame received a cumbersome qualification—"Mère de Sa Majesté L'Empereur"—to distinguish her from this non-materialized rival. The Emperor usually spoke of her as Madame, but the people preferred Madame Mère.

Lucien's house was decorated for her return, and Napoleon, who knew how to give rewards for surrender, cordially and at once came to welcome her. She was allowed an income of a million francs. His offer of a suite at the Tuileries had been refused because of her dislike of the place, but "as a new proof of his desire to please her" he bought Château Pont; "she would thus become owner of one of the finest estates in France. He believed she had visited it ten years before."

A rigid etiquette ruled her court, which had

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a nucleus of two *dames d'honneur*, five ladies-in-waiting, a reader, two chamberlains, two equerries, a steward, and a secretary. She asked that Madame de Marboeuf, the widow of her Ajacian admirer, should be appointed lady of honour to her, flashing out perhaps in momentary *schadenfreude*. Napoleon thought it unseemly to offer a lady a subordinate position in a family which was under such deep obligations to her husband.

She was employed under the Empire as the patroness of the benevolent institutions throughout the country. For a few years she presided stiffly over hospital meetings, speaking rarely and disbursing funds with more stint than enthusiasm. Questions of State were beyond her influence and probably her interest. The Comte Murat, however, has insisted she was always in secret correspondence with the absent Napoleon concerning the feeling in the capital and court. Ministers would sometimes

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have a pre-emptory command from her to find a Corsican acquaintance a post.

She came to the great Court the widow of a Corsican attorney, schooled in the kitchen and unpractised in the graces of the salon. She might have diverted the nation from an idolized Emperor by trailing in the rear of the imperial procession, a fat and vociferous matron of the Mediterranean, yet even Bonaparte's enemies agreed she took her place quietly and with dignity at his right hand, before the princes.

"Over fifty, but beautiful enough to inspire amorous approaches," declared an unsusceptible observer. The Court argued for an adjective until they determined her smile was "bewitching." She passed it down, with her perfect teeth, to all her children. "Her eyes were not large, but very dark, bright, intelligent and penetrating."

"In society her shyness was always a hin-

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drance to her, as well as her permanent difficulty in expressing herself in French." The taint of Corsican patois would set Napoleon tapping his snuffbox and frowning. During the Consulate he had asked Joseph to prevent her from calling him Napolion. "It's a name which sounds vilely in French—an Italian name. Let her call me Bonaparte, like everyone else, not Buonaparti above all. That would be worse than Napolion. . . . But no, let her say First Consul, or the Consul simply. Yes, I like that best. But Napolion, always that Napolion. It annoys me."

Then he agreed with Lucien and Joseph, who were with him, that Napoleon was a fine name after all.

"Then why not let maman use it?"

"I tell you. She pronounces it like the Italians, and that is disagreeable; and however much she tries to give it a French pronunciation she can't succeed. Between ourselves our mother has never known how to

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“speak either French or Italian. It’s annoying.”

“But our mother speaks the Italian they use in Corsica.”

“Do you think I feel flattered when she replies in patois to a phrase in pure Tuscan?”

“Patois! But in Corsica——”

“Well, confess, is it not very disagreeable?”

Lucien could see nothing disagreeable in it; Joseph only that Napoleon disliked people in Paris to remember their family was Corsican.

“Ridicule must be avoided before everything . . . and our mother, with her Corsican jargon——Corsican, I admit. . . .”

Joseph, red-faced and breathing heavily, spoke hastily——“You admit? But it is; it must be.”

Napoleon caught fire from his warmth——Corsica! A pimple of a place . . . half-French, half-Italian. No use their being angry; it would make no difference. He was very sorry he had ever been born a Corsican.

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*"Pourvu que cela dure."* Madame sighed in her crude French over fortunes more magnificent than enduring. And though Napoleon at the family dinner each Sunday chatted with her affectionately and cheerfully, he could not forgive her doubts.

Standing firmly upon the ground herself, she grew anxious as Napoleon's shadow spread ambitiously over the world. "Your nephew will bring about his own downfall," she writes to Fesch, "as well as his family's. He ought to be satisfied with what he has already; by striving for more he will lose everything."

"How do you like being at Court, Signora?" —Napoleon accuses her. "It wearies you, doesn't it? You don't understand how to enjoy life. Look at your daughters: they seem born to their position. I have given you a house in the capital, a beautiful country villa, with an income of a million francs, and yet you live like a bourgeoisie of St. Denis. You mustn't

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scrape your money together but spend all I give you."

"Then let me have two millions instead of one, for I must economize. It's my nature."

Napoleon always declared her parsimony ridiculous, but "if he had needed money she would have ruined herself to give all her savings to him."

Her correspondence with him became cool and ceremonious on account of her constant applications for additions to her income. She was not deterred from continuing to apply. Her children learned to expect her answer when they gibed at her avarice: "Who knows whether all these kings will not come some day to beg their bread of me?"

"All this pomp may come to an end—we Corsicans have seen many revolutions—and what would become of my children? They would turn to me, and it would certainly be better for them to come to their mother than to

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strangers who would reject and betray them."

She was unhappy during the Empire. "All men considered me the happiest mother in the world, yet my life was one of uninterrupted sorrow and martyrdom." The Emperor's mother was estranged from him, and feared assassinations in Paris and battlefields abroad. Deeply attached to her children, she was often alone or not at ease when they met. She complained that the companionship of any one of them was denied her; they were almost always away, reigning somewhere. Their quarrels disturbed her; Napoleon spoke of banishing Jerome, of tragic scenes between himself and Lucien. The *dévôte* was shocked at the Pope's indignity, at Napoleon's moving him about from one prison to another as each Bull was flung at him. Fesch had been sent off for gloomily deprecating such violence: "*Assez*, prophet of misfortune, go back to your diocese and stay there until I ask for you." Illness came, dragging behind depression, and fell

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upon her. Migraines, paralyzing neuralgic pains, were provoked by sorrow, insomnia and loneliness. But she would rise from the table with an appetite, resign herself to the will of God, and plan the next weary tour in the long search for health.

## PONT AND VERSAILLES

"WAIT a moment," the Countess is bidden by Madame Mère. Her letter of introduction would be read immediately. Could she do this sort of work?

On the large table before Madame were scores of little baskets and articles of bead work.

"No, Madame."

"Neither can I. I buy them from the poor widows of our fallen officers . . . there are so many of them. Turning to the quick, misshapen little gentleman-in-waiting: "You remember, Cossé, the crippled lady who worked them with her clever fingers. I'm doing a kind-

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ness to the poor thing. All my ladies will take them; don't you think?"

"Certainly; most willingly. A gift from Madame Mère must always be acceptable."

"A gift? What are you thinking of? I pay for them, and make others pay too. My dear, it's evident you're not economical."

The Countess is impishly urged to laughter but Monsieur Cossé-Brissac stiffens.

Madame asks her about Roman beads. . . .

"They are much dearer than those used in this kind of work." A diplomatic reply, the Countess hoped.

"My young friend, I know the price of every variety. I'm not easily imposed upon, but then I don't play the princess like my daughters. . . .

"By the way, is there any news today? Cossé seems so depressed that I'm quite uneasy. Everyone says my son ought to have made peace, but I for my part believe whatever he does is for the best."

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An abrupt nod. The Countess hastens to leave and is gravely escorted to the door. As she withdraws, her face towards Madame, she has difficulty with her train.

"Go straight before you," comes the warm voice of the Signora in bad French, "this etiquette will bring you to fall."

At the Château and the Trianon the evenings were dull, with reversi and the conversation of the clerics the chief entertainment. The game was a veritable "*goût de famille*," and one which demanded despotic application of the successful player. Madame Mère was perfect; Paoli had always risen in defeat from her table with: "*La Signora aveva codetta guiooco nel sangue*"; she had the game in her blood.

## *Chapter V*

# THE MOTHER OF KINGS

### THE BONAPARTES UNDER THE EMPIRE

“AM I not your Emperor?”

The family were oppressed and satiated after the Sunday dinner at the Tuileries. Napoleon had stretched out his hand to Madame Mère, implying she ought to kiss it.

She pushed it away. . . .

“Am I not your mother? And aren’t you above everything my son?”

Napoleon (it is piously related) was silenced and bowed over her hand, while Marie Louise made the simpering observation, “When I was in Vienna I always kissed the hand of the Emperor of Austria.”

Although Madame had reserved a claim to

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her own independence, her children she had always bade submit to the Emperor, realizing how incapable they were of gratitude and what disharmony would be caused by their resistance. "The Emperor was the father of them all, and had the right to ask the obedience of his brothers." But she still disliked his parades of careless possession, and insisted on a semblance of respect. When he restored Roman Catholicism as the State religion she had remarked, "she had no need now to box his ears to make him go to church."

"No, it's now my turn to box my mother's," in rough pleasantry—and patted her cheek. Her face had darkened with annoyance. "Not because he did it," she explained afterwards, "but because he had the right to do it."

With slight obstinacy she refused to perfect herself in French, and to spend like a begum. She asserted herself in bold criticism of his policy where subordinates were often stifled by his egotism; against his aggressions upon her

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individuality she could present implacable habit and a tenacious purpose.

Unable to outsay him when she exiled herself, to elicit his forgiveness of Lucien's marriage, she had abandoned the mutinous benedict but not her struggle for reconciliation. She had come so near to effecting a compromise that Napoleon had yielded in everything but the objection to "widow Joubberthou," the "bankrupt's widow." The final concession must obviously be made by Lucien; and a year after leaving him she was advising separation. "The Emperor and I had a talk about you the night before he left. I was very happy to hear of his good feeling . . . the hope of an understanding between my sons is like a solacing balm. I cannot rest until it has been effected, but you must help me. Campi will write to tell you what I wish you to do. Your *mother* entreats you. If you let this chance slip I fear it may prove the last, and I shall be

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doomed to spend the remainder of my days in sorrow."

She brought her sons together at Mantua. Lucien was offered a kingdom for his wife; for six hours Napoleon bargained with him. "Would he have Italy? Or would he have Spain?" Blank refusal was perilous, and might even incur imprisonment. Prudently, he required time to consider it all . . . reached the threshold, ran to his waiting coach, and fled.

Madame pursued him through the next few years with letters. She invited his eldest daughter to Paris when Napoleon decided to remarry, promising to introduce Lolotte to the Emperor as soon as her clothes were ready, confident she would be kindly received. The incidental requirements of the occasion prompted her to send Campi to Napoleon with the message that she would need more money now that Lolotte had come. "Maman said that to you?" Napoleon replied. "Maman will do

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her duty. She will take care of her daughter. Always her avarice!"

Lolotte mildly attracted the Emperor, pleased him with her resemblance to the Bonapartes. Madame rested satisfied until after one of the Sunday dinners Napoleon took about twenty letters from his pocket; Lolotte's, and to her father. Deliberately he read them, reading evenly of a tyrannous uncle, a grasping Madame Mère, of selfish aunts; raising a beetling anger in the family with the letters' sarcasm. Pauline alone rocked with laughter; Madame was impassive. The Emperor addressed himself seriously to the weeping Lolotte. . . . She had been ungrateful to those who had treated her kindly, to her grandmother; she would of course be sent home.

Madame was driven to the final plea in writing to Alexandrine. "You know all the misfortunes your marriage has brought upon the family. You will understand what a cruel burden it is if I propose you should take the initia-

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tive. The Emperor *insists* on your divorce, and it is for you to urge submission upon Lucien, to demand a separation if he is backward. It is the only way to escape the disgrace which threatens him as well as your children and all who are dependent on you. . . . Reflect upon the choice between a life of sorrow and bitterness which you must expect if you are obstinate, and the prospect of a brilliant fortune. If you have any esteem for a mother who has always sacrificed herself for her family you will yield for my sake."

Strain had exhausted her; refusal and disappointment prostrated her. "You will hear from Campi that I am ill in bed; your last letter has contributed not a little to unnerve me. Your persistent obstinacy will inevitably shorten my days; yet it was in your power to give me life and happiness."

"You are both right and wrong," Madame answered when Napoleon complained of his

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brother's incapacity for kingship. "Right if you compare your brothers with yourself, for you are extraordinary, unique, without an equal. But you are wrong to speak slightly of them if you compare them with other kings, for they are all stupid; they all act as if blindfolded."

"Signora Letizia, are you flattering me?"

"I flatter you? Never. A mother never flatters her child. You know that when others are present I treat you with respect because I am your subject, but in the family circle I am your mother; if you say 'I will,' I shan't hesitate to reply 'I will not.' "

His family system allowed her a measure of responsibility, and he employed her to appease rebellious monarchs and direct the wayward; to admonish unstately grand duchesses and reprimand the disloyal.

Sybaritic Joseph had studied for the priesthood, managed salt mines, entered the army, and qualified as an attorney; by the grace of Napoleon he now became King of Naples and

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ruled for three years. The Spanish throne was given to him when Madrid was purged of an etiolated king, a raddled and abusive queen and her paramour Godoy. A week in occupation and he withdrew, writing hastily to his brother that Spain was quite unlike any other country . . . they must have an army of 50,000 to do the fighting, another 50,000 to keep open the communications, and about 10,000 gallows for traitors and scoundrels.

The system had torn Louis from dreams of a schoolgirl whose name he did not know and transported him into magnificent nuptials with Josephine's daughter. His sonnets to the Pope were thrown away and the Batavian Republic furbished up to make a reluctant monarchy for him. He became Dutch and sadistic. Napoleon was censorious about his solicitude for his subjects and his treating his wife like a troop of soldiers; for he tormented her with hypochondriacal suspicions, and eventually drove her away to Paris. When recalled by

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the Emperor he fell ill in Madame's house, where he was surrounded with a guard of gendarmerie to prevent a surreptitious escape to his kingdom. Upon his recovery he returned to govern for a few more months, this time in spiritless acquiescence, until he threw away his crown and deserted. Madame was mystified and fearful for three weeks, when her anxiety was relieved by a note from the Emperor. "The King was residing in Bavaria. . . . Ill-health could be the only possible explanation of his strange behaviour."

America had offered Jerome enthusiastic hospitality and a bride, when he was ordered there with the navy. Neither the misgivings of Miss Patterson's father, a Baltimore merchant, nor the remonstrances of Madame and Joseph could deter him from marriage. Madame at Napoleon's command immediately declared it invalid, and was rewarded with the offer of the Grand Trianon as a summer residence. After confidently hoping during the voyage to over-

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come Napoleon, the bride was forbidden to land at Lisbon, where Jerome left her, protesting eternal and possibly ruinous fidelity. When they saw him Madame and Joseph were willing to recognize the marriage, but Napoleon stormed upon the "young sinner" and soon wrung from him a promise to divorce his wife. Jerome became a rear-admiral and an Imperial Highness. Elizabeth sailed for Amsterdam and was warned off by two Dutch men-of-war. Solitary—except for an embryonic Bonaparte—and without support, she landed in England. On the birth of her son she returned to the United States.

Napoleon extorted for Jerome a wife from the King of Wurtemberg and the Kingdom of Westphalia from Prussia and other German territories. Caroline's husband, Murat, had been invested with the Grand Duchy of Cleve and Berg before receiving the succession to the throne of Naples. Elisa ruled in the sovereign principality of Lucca and had a further grant

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of the Grand Duchy of Tuscany. Pauline was disgusted with the gift of the little Duchy of Guastalla.

Madame had frequently to assist Napoleon in suppressing their petty revolts. They mutinied at Napoleon's second marriage, against his command that they should bear the Empress's robes.

"Remember the Emperor is accustomed to obedience," Madame warned them. "He may be wrong in this case, but if he persists in his demand you are bound to do as he bids you." Napoleon came into the room as she was finishing and kissed her warmly.

## THE DIVORCE OF JOSEPHINE

NAPOLÉON hastened to finish his speech to the lugubrious little company: "At the age of forty I may still hope to have children. I may be spared sufficiently long to educate them to my own views."

Josephine was dressed in mourning; the

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paper trembled and rustled painfully in her hands. Her voice grew thick with tears and her eyes were blinded. "You see an unhappy woman before you . . . I shall soon die. . . . Do as you will. I will submit." She could not say or read more.

The paper fell from her hands; Eugène, her son, picked it up for her, but she thrust it spasmodically towards the Imperial House Steward, who continued the funereal recital.

The bill of divorce was placed before her and the Emperor for their signatures. "Madame" came next, traced faintly in large letters almost on a level with Napoleon's name.

Eugène had been summoned from Milan to communicate to his mother the news that the Emperor had decided to divorce her. She had failed to produce an heir, and the son born of her daughter's marriage to Louis had died. Napoleon's sisters had urged alliance with a princess of royal blood; Caroline had schemed suavely from the Elysée Palace, breaking out in

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fluent abuse before intimates; and ministers had counselled separation—even Fouché, a former protégé. Napoleon had long been irritable and embarrassed with her, eschewing her bed and ignoring her seraphic amiability. Her unre-laxing gentleness had relapsed at last into tear-ful preoccupation.

Madame she had approached, solicitous for friendship, and had met with no response. For could Madame accept Eugène Beauharnais as the successor to the Empire or pardon the author of Louis' *mésalliance*?

Madame appeared as hostess at the Imperial court after the divorce, but within three months retired before Marie Louise. The Bonapartes in family council had supported Napoleon in this alliance with the house of Hapsburg-Lorraine. The Austrian ambassador had been dined by Madame and Louis, and had been promised their full favour.

Napoleon brought his bride from her mutilated books, and pets and companions of

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anxious femininity, to the château at Compiègne. Crowds awaited them, shivering in the drenched March night. Madame awaited them in the château, cold, capable and not unconscious of her honour. She received Marie Louise at the foot of the staircase and conducted her to her apartments.

During the civil ceremony at St. Cloud she stood below the reigning kings, and on the next day crowned the bevy of queens in the large square hall of the Louvre.

"Insidious when seen closely, insidious in her speech," Madame condemned the Empress in the years after her leaving Napoleon. Their meetings were formal, even distant, except for a solitary advance by Marie Louise not required by etiquette. The Emperor was in Russia. "Madame, I should like to dine with you today, but I am not come as Empress; it must not be inconvenient." Madame kissed her on the cheek and heartily assured her: "I shan't make the slightest difference on your account.

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I receive you as my daughter. The Emperor's wife shall dine with the Emperor's mother."

She showed little interest in the birth of Napoleon's son and concerned herself only to the extent of standing sponsor (with the Austrian Emperor's representative) at his christening, and of paying a visit of congratulation to the Empress. Even this formality could not be observed without friction. The Empress would neither allow *fauteuils* to the Bonapartes in her presence, nor permit them to come uninvited and unannounced, and her lady-in-waiting had been careful to remove everything but plain chairs. Madame and her daughters refused to sit down and left after a few minutes.

## *Chapter VI*

# THE DECLINE OF THE EMPIRE

PREOCCUPIED and irritable on his return from campaign, Napoleon would break off abruptly when she came to greet him. Defeat had openly declared itself in Paris, and the faubourg St. Germain smiled covertly about mutinous soldiery, about Russian farewells: "Thank God the ruffian has gone at last"; about Spanish hatred: "Why don't we shoot him? We suffer worse than convicts."

"I know people are pleased to call me the Corsican cannibal," Napoleon retorted, "but I will restrain my wrath until they accuse me of breakfasting on my mother."

Madame emerged vigorously from her retirement to rally the family. "This is no time

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for etiquette," she wrote to Fesch; "the Bourbons lost everything because they did not know how to die, sword in hand."

Lucien, from England, proposed a settlement of his quarrel, and the Emperor "heartily desired it." . . . Let Madame write to him saying the letter had found a warm response in his heart. Louis "was coming, Sire, to offer his country and his family all that remained of his shattered health and any service he might render." Madame guarded against possible relapse with irresistible persuasions. "The step did credit alike to his heart and judgment, and would make her love him even more tenderly, if that were possible. . . . He would bring peace and rest to her if he would only come. If even now he refused he might have to reproach himself with having shortened the sorrowful remainder of her days and with having caused her to descend to her grave without a regret." They were comprehensive ingratiations: "His brother had forgotten to give her

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the poems; she would ask him for them and criticize them in her next letter."

She was sent to Mortefontaine, whither Joseph had retreated, hurt and surprised at having the Spanish throne snatched from under him. Napoleon had never learned to relinquish the gifts he made, nor his brothers those they received. Madame's mission was again one of mediation. Two days afterward Joseph roused himself and changed his nationality, in a letter for the *Moniteur*. "The approach of foreign troops from the Swiss frontier had exposed France to the enemy, and he trusted in these circumstances his Majesty would feel convinced his sentiments were sincerely French. . . . He begged him to believe he was prepared to prove his devotion."

But Jerome had been forbidden to enter Paris and Caroline, with her husband, Murat, had deserted the Emperor.

The allied armies stood before Paris. The Empire lumbered in muddy flight to Vendôme;

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the great coronation coach crawled into Blois in the evening, escorted by carriages of ministers with wives and children, by coaches heavy with archives and the crown jewels. Madame and her sons were invited to neighbouring châteaux, and the Empress and the King of Rome were sheltered in the Town Hall. They rested there for five days, feeling the strangeness of recent uprooting and the imminence of great change, until news came of Napoleon's abdication.

Marie Louise had been recalled to Austria by her father. She bade good-bye to the Bonapartes on Easter eve. "I hope, Madame, that you will always retain the feelings of goodwill with which you have always honoured me."

Madame was not effusive: "That will depend upon you and what you do in the future."

She drove out of Blois herself a few hours later with Joseph and Jerome, and her suite. At Orleans the Baroness Fontanges and other ladies resigned their duties. Fesch brought her to Rome, where the Pope received her again:

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"Welcome, my daughter, welcome to the city which has always provided refuge for the fugitive."

Old Colonna, hat in hand, offered her his arm each time she crossed the deck, but his punctilio was strained as they neared Elba: she leapt with gay agility upon a cannon for her first view of her son's house.

A covert Scottish soldier thought the old lady "very good looking." When they met later for a holiday lunch under the ship's awning—she eating quickly, with birdlike appetite—he found her "amiable, natural, and straightforward."

Her passport did not suggest disagreement concerning her beauty:

"Age	64
Height	5 ft 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ ins
Hair	Chiefly grey
Brow	Arched
Eyebrows	Nut-brown
Eyes	Brown

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Nose	Finely moulded
Mouth	Small
Chin	Round
Face	Oval
Complexion	Clear."

The months at Elba had more contentment for her than all the years of the Empire. Not since Napoleon's visit as a young officer to their Corsican home had her intimacy with him been so close. Mediterranean warmth and the island's delight in its little court exhilarated her. With mild surprise she found that in public occasions lay unsuspected possibilities of pleasure, that her affections might still freshen and expand. She gave the largest fête in the history of the island in honour of her son's birthday; a companion for the rest of her life she found in Rosa Mellini, the devout and beautiful daughter of a retired artillery officer. The girl joined in needlework in the mornings, sitting before a table covered with portraits of

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the Emperor and his brothers; accompanied her to the modest festivities of Porto Ferraja, and with Pauline also attended regularly the tiny theatre. Napoleon seemed content—even he did not realize how much it was only the hope of return which sustained him: sometimes *triste*, when activity failed to divert him; but “Madame and Pauline,” he asserted, “would reconcile him to life on the island for a long time to come, if he really needed consolation.” Madame, however, deplored the arrival of the Countess Walewska, who brought her son by Napoleon, but before him she affected not to notice. A regretful suite remarked his growing fatness.

The strange spring night hung close, a night of memories unescapable as those of childhood.

“The Emperor appeared unusually gay and invited Pauline and me to a game of *écarté*,” she writes in her *Mémoires*. “Immediately

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afterward he left us and withdrew to his cabinet. As he did not return I went to call him, but the chamberlain told me he had gone down into the garden.

“It was a fresh spring evening, I remember. The moon was shining through the trees, and the Emperor was pacing hastily the length of the garden paths. He stopped suddenly and leaned against a tree; I heard him say: ‘But for all that I must tell my mother.’

“I approached him and asked him with suppressed eagerness: ‘*Eh bien!* What is it this evening? You seem very uneasy.’

“The Emperor raised his hand to his brow and replied after hesitating, ‘Yes, I must tell you, but you must repeat nothing, to no one, not even Pauline.’ He smiled, kissed me, and went on, ‘*Eh bien,* I warn you of my departure, tonight.’

“ ‘Where are you going?’

“ ‘To Paris. But before I go I ask your opinion.’

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“ ‘Let me forget first, let me try to forget first, you are my son.’ I reflected. . . .

“ ‘Heaven will never let you die by poison nor in unworthy inactivity, but sword in hand.’ ”

Madame reached Paris three months after his landing and the day before he drove to the Champs de Mars in a white silk coat, plumed hat and imperial mantle, drawn by eight fat horses, with Joseph, Lucien, and Jerome following in cloaks of white silk embroidered with velvet, and Cambacérès in blue velvet covered with golden bees. “Looking deeply serious,” she stood near the Emperor when he handed the great eagles to hooknosed, ornate warriors.

Her mistrust was shared by her son. As he stepped into the carriage for the army in Belgium and Waterloo, “Let us hope, Madame Bertrand,” he said, “we shan’t soon be regretting we ever left Elba.”

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Fouché, the Minister of Police, sent a message of refusal when Napoleon offered to place himself at the head of the remnants of the army—Fouché, the *aasvogel*, stooping over the ruined Empire, to whom Carnot, dismissed from the Ministry of Interior, wrote in loathing: "*Où faut-il que je me rende, traître?*" and had reply: "*Où tu voudras, imbécile.*"

Napoleon thereupon changed his uniform for civil clothes and prepared for flight. In the empty banqueting hall at Malmaison his staff and his family assembled—his mother, his brothers and sisters—and wept. Hortense sobbed as she stitched her diamond necklace into his coat, for he had forgotten the need of money. He embraced them all and addressed them for the last time, adjuring them to be firm in unity and courage.

He was left alone with his mother when a national guardsman came to the hall and begged that he might take leave of the Emperor. He was recognized as the actor Talma,

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who had received much of the Emperor's friendship and Pauline's love.

As he went out Talma looked over his shoulder, and beheld the Emperor, greatly impassive, "his face like marble," and his mother, with tears rolling down her cheeks, holding his hand. "*Adieu, mons fils.*"

"*Ma mère, adieu.*"

He took her into his arms, she being the last to receive his embrace.

## *Chapter VII*

# MATER DOLOROSA

### THE EXILES

MADAME reclined in a wheel-chair, nearly blind, her frail old body broken at the hip, her face towards the visitors as they hung diffidently at the door. The stillness of the palazzo had hushed their conversation when they entered; a footman in imperial livery had silently brought them to Rosa Mellini, who in turn with the meek state of an abbess had led them to Madame's bedroom.

"Come close," Madame told them, "I am unable to see you, and I want to tell you how delighted I am to see Frenchmen. There are few who want to visit the mother of the unhappy Emperor. . . ."

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Their steps as they approached her were grossly heavy. They attempted to pitch their voices to the lowness of Madame's or to imbue them with the unobtrusiveness of the broken phrases which floated up from the sunlit Corso.

“. . . No, there are only English and Americans," Madame said, "and the English I will not even acknowledge."

The room was darkened, for she was neither completely blind nor entirely recovered from a prostrating migraine. Her black eyes had lost their sharpness and her cheeks had no more colour than alabaster. The brow beneath her white turban, the young Frenchmen noticed, was that of Napoleon. Since her son's death she had always worn this mourning: the long gown of black merino. Over her feet was thrown an ermine cloak. They kissed her cold hands.

She moved her head rarely, but now she drew their regard to the shabby little table at her side. "It was by his bedside at St. Helena.

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All I have of his is in this room." A slight hand was raised towards the heavy pedestal supporting a looming bust of the dead King of Rome: "His last look was turned towards that. Poor child, he left them to me in his will—a little table and a bust."

She sighed and returned to their visit. "Not a very cheerful thing for you to come to see the Emperor's mother, an old woman with one foot in the grave. . . . I have gone through a great deal in my life. When I was about thirty I was left a widow with eight children. Napoleon was fourteen, and his father and I had been to see him at Brienne. My poor husband died away from me. You shall see his portrait."

Colonna, her old Corsican major domo, was called; he had been Napoleon's commander in his first action.

The salon walls were covered with the portraits of kings and queens of the Bonaparte family in court dress. Carlo's hung in a deep niche.

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“ . . . The Emperor was more like Madame than his father.”

“Yes, and he was a handsome fellow when in a bright humour. But in thinking over his great plans he always wore a very deep, stern look. I used to say to him, ‘Child, it makes me angry when people say you are like me.’ He would laugh at me and kiss me then. Poor fellow! He was such a good boy.”

She raised her hand in the manner of priestly benediction when they asked her blessing. “God grant they might be happy, but let them submit to His will in all things. Let them think sometimes of Napoleon’s old mother, who would soon be asleep.”

Ill-health had detained her in Paris until the arrival of the Bourbons. A month after Napoleon had gone she hastened away towards Switzerland under the protection of an Austrian officer and Fesch, who had remained with her. Cheap provincial towns became generous of their hospitality and squalid villages

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awakened to enthusiasm—"Long live the Emperor's mother." After a short stay at Siena she took up her residence in Rome at the invitation of Pius VII, having ensured her welcome by lending him 50,000 francs.

A debilitated Europe oppressed her family; and she felt the incubus of the nations' hatred; was depressed because her children were not allowed to visit her, and shaken by the hard news of Napoleon's banishment to Elba.

Among the peoples of her hag-ridden oppressors arose unrestful rumours of Napoleon's return, of St. Helena shattered by a volcano or foundering mysteriously under the weight of Napoleon; of Bonapartes swarming furtively to a mother in Rome and planning a devastating coup; of a mother who instigated it, possessing great and secret power, and agents operating with vague but affrighting ubiquity.

Austria started violently when Murat fell upon Calabria with two hundred Corsicans and

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shot him after a brief wild trial. The French press was obsessed with the vermin which infested Napoleon's dwelling and practised virulent variations on old anathema; the Signora would tremble and crimson when their invective was read to her. The English fenced around Napoleon's rock with barriers and soldiers and set ships to sail about him; fatuously pretended not to remember when he was called the Emperor. France had banished her children and would not permit Madame to live in Corsica. Lucien was incarcerated in Turin, and others wandered between Italian cities, spied upon and impoverished.

"I am indeed a Mater Dolorosa," Madame wrote.

She appealed to the Congress of Aix for Napoleon's liberation when he suffered in health. "A mother who has been cast down more than words can express has long been hoping that your imperial and royal majesties

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will restore her to happiness. . . . Sires, I am a mother and my son's life is dearer to me than my own. . . . Do you allow a mother to plead in vain when she appeals to you against the long-continued cruelty which has been exercised towards her son."

The plea was ignored, and she grieved again and agedly over fresh reports of his illness: "The allied sovereigns—I knew they would be the death of me."

A spirited front was presented to the French King's orders for an investigation of her share in Corsican discontent. "Tell the Pope, and let my words be transmitted to Louis XVIII. If I were fortunate enough to possess the millions with which I am so generously credited, I should certainly not use them to create disturbances, nor to acquire adherents for my son in France; he has sufficient. I should employ them to fit out a fleet and to remove the Emperor from St. Helena, where by iniquitous perfidy he is held in bondage."

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The Empire lingers in the Palazzo Buona-  
parte as well as at Longwood. The people of  
Rome recognize her carriage and the dignified  
profile; each guide brings his little herd past  
her palazzo, or sweeps his arm suddenly among  
the ruins of ancient Rome—"Signori, ecco la  
*madre di Napolione.*" A tour in Italy can offer  
the wife of Boulanger, the artist, no three spec-  
tacles more worthy than these: Vesuvius in  
eruption, Venice *en carnaval*, and Madame  
Mère. Madame is nearly eighty, and carrying  
with dignity and magnificent strength the bur-  
den of her years and her immense sorrows. She  
determines for herself a status of undiminished  
dignity in her household, and they pay her de-  
vout and unvarying observation. Even to Rosa  
Mellini she says little and speaks with reserve.  
She proudly forbids the exchange of the Im-  
perial arms on her carriage for those of her  
husband. "Why should I? The whole of Europe  
bowed to the dust before my son's arms for ten  
years, and her sovereigns have not forgotten."

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Noticing the insignia two Austrian officers ride up and peer inside. She lets down the window and asks coldly: "Gentlemen, what is your pleasure of the mother of the Emperor Napoleon?"

The Palazzo Buonaparte stands aloof in gloom when the city is illuminated in honour of the Austrian Emperor's visit, each of the window-blinds tightly drawn at Madame's orders.

Unweakened by her impotence she preserves the enmities of the Emperor. When the future Napoleon III thinks of entering the Russian army she asks: "Is not your name Napoleon?" "Certainly." "Then"—with severity—"you ought to know what it behoves you to do."

The Austrian Emperor arranges to visit the ex-Queen of Etruria whose residence is next to Madame's. Mistakenly his adjutant enters her house and stamps to the salon: "My gracious master, the Emperor of Austria. . . ." Madame rises: "Go, and tell your master, the Emperor of Austria, that there can be no inter-

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course between him and the mother of the Emperor Napoleon."

Caroline's attempts to obtain her forgiveness found her immovable. Napoleon had left in his mother's trust a bitter contempt for the "treacherous barber" and anger for the sister who governed him. Murat had sent twelve horses to Madame immediately after his desertion, but they were instantly sent back. Caroline had at last succeeded in entering her presence; solicitously she asked what she had done to deserve such dislike.

"What have you done? Betrayed your brother, your benefactor."

But her husband had sole control over his policy, Caroline objected, and he could not have helped Napoleon by not making peace with Austria.

"You have betrayed your benefactor": Napoleon's anger was echoed in her voice. "You ought to have done your utmost to restrain your

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husband from his disastrous decision. Murat should have passed over your body before he came to such baseness. The Emperor was his benefactor as well as yours. *Retirez-vous.*"

"But had he done otherwise he would have harmed himself to no purpose. If he. . . ."

Madame turned her back upon her daughter — "*Retirez-vous, Caroline.*"

Alone among her family Madame seemed able to comport herself with the dignity and firmness which would rescue their exile from travesty. The others also attempted to retain something of the old status, but unlike her sustained themselves with vague and delusive expectations of the recognition and continuous bounty they had enjoyed under the Empire. They spent blindly and were continually soliciting Madame. "My children," she told Rosa, "have never been able to understand the depths of humiliation into which they have sunk since

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the fall of the Empire." Sometimes she would send money, but often there was "one supremely unhappy and far more in need of help than any of the others," or energetically she urged readjustment.

Jerome had unsavoury and vigorous advice: "I grieve that I cannot impart my character to you. Imitate me. Retrench in your household, if necessary break it up, dismiss every servant. It would be more honourable to struggle against adversity and conquer, and I am convinced Catherine is strong-minded enough to draw in as closely as possible." A man's position must be governed by his means, she insisted, with a conviction implanted by forty years on the edge of penury. If a man had ceased to be a king it was ridiculous to pose as one. "Rings adorned fingers, but they fell off and the fingers remained."

And after all, as she philosophized with Lucien, the greater part of human life consisted

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of unhappiness and misfortunes. Realizing this they were strengthened and could triumph over all adversity, especially when they were not directly at fault.

Finally she became impatient with them. It was useless to solicit her further; they merely disturbed her tranquillity and her health demanded complete repose.

Marie Louise encounters a resentment deeper than her husband's, at her preference for concubinage with the "polisson" Neipperg to reigning over the perch of "crippled sea-birds" on the Atlantic rock. She sends the ambassador at the Papal court to inquire if Madame will receive her on her visiting Rome. "Your visit astonishes me," replies Madame severely. "You insult my daughter-in-law by asserting she is travelling in Italy instead of living at St. Helena with her husband. The person you speak of cannot be my daughter-in-

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law. It must be some unscrupulous woman who has dared to take her name."

The Hapsburgs have shifted to absurd limits that they may free themselves from their ignoble tie. Not only is Madame prohibited from seeing the King of Rome and from writing to him, but a document is prepared by the Empress in which it is announced that the Archduchess Marie Louise has given birth to a son—to whom rank, arms, and family name have been assigned. Neither his nor his father's name is mentioned.

Madame laughs bitterly, and comments with obvious but unusual broadness. "We are certainly even with the house of Austria. It seems that when they gave Marie Louise to my son it was not as his wife but as his mistress."

Interest in this grandson is now of tremulous intensity; her visitors are avidly questioned. When he is made Duke of Reichstadt she is certain he could never bear a better name than his

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father's. This title is meaningless; "the name of Napoleon Bonaparte will resound to the world's end."

It is bruited to Rome, when the Bourbons are expelled from Paris during the July Revolution, that her grandson has been offered the throne. Her excitement makes her ill.

Two years later she is breathing "her grandmother's blessing" on the head of his friend Prokesch Osten, who has delighted her with expatiations on his resemblance to his father and his pride of family. "May he always act in accordance with the will of his father." With the sure prophetic intuition of women, "his time will come and he will surely reign." And at that moment the King of Rome is drawing his last phthisical breath; within a few days is entombed in the great vaults of the Hapsburgs.

"There is nothing for them," Marie Louise wrote after twenty years' silence, "but to share their loss and mingle their tears." Cardinal Fesch replies for Madame, and the house of

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Bonaparte is wholly severed from the house of Hapsburg.

“So I must outlive all my children and mourn their loss.” Elisa, Napoleon, and Pauline had died. “I have lost the brightest jewel of my crown.”

## *Chapter VIII*

### N A P O L E O N ' S   D E A T H

PHYSICIANS, servants and chaplains followed each other on the long journey from Rome to St. Helena, permission to send them having been procured for Madame by the Pope. The young Antommarchi was to bring home an account of Napoleon's death as he considered it should have occurred, his priceless death mask, and untruths. O'Meara, the confidential servant of the Emperor, the confidential agent of the Governor and, unknown to both, the confidential informant of the British Government—he and others were to concoct means of rescue. Madame plainly knew of the conspiracies and probably satisfied sometimes the incidental and inevitable demand for cash. But O'Meara's effort “on a large scale, when the mighty

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powers of steam were to be mustered to their assistance" could not proceed because her capital was withheld. She was willing to pay over the whole of her fortune when the rescue had been effected. O'Meara declared it to be immediately necessary for the purposes of the scheme.

Napoleon was riding with Bertrand and Montholon on the plateau which roofs the island. He had received that morning a letter from his mother which he had torn up, but he was sufficiently moved to quote it. Old and blind as she is, she wishes to come. "I am very old to make a journey of 3000 leagues. Perhaps I should die on the way but it would not matter, I should die nearer you." He refuses to allow her to share his captivity although each year she asks that she may come.

The fall of the Empire had pained her for her son's sake, his exile made her desolate. "You who are the mother of this man," she told

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herself, "can never be happy again, for misfortune has overtaken your son." Her life had ended with the fall of Napoleon; she had renounced everything and for ever—society, even the theatre, which had formerly been her only distraction in times of depression. She was often urged to go but always refused; in fact, she considered the suggestion almost an insult.

"You see how our mother mourns over the misfortunes and illness of our brother," Pauline remarks to Laure Junot. "Pain will not bring her to the grave; she will suffer a long while yet, but her agony is more acute than the Emperor's."

While in the superfluous days of the Empire she had been accused of parsimony, she now deplores that she cannot give him all she has—"300,000 francs, with 150,000 owing." "What of it?" she demands when they object to this prospect of imperilled comfort. "What of it? If I had nothing, I should take a staff and go forth to ask alms for the mother of Napoleon."

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The Emperor receives 100,000 francs of her money but other sums do not reach him. She complains of letters lost or stolen and that all are opened. "She would long ago have decided not to give amusement too often to foreign ministers, if a mother could renounce the joy of conversing with her unhappy son."

Joseph seems to reproach her that she does not join him in America and to hint that her attachment to Fesch keeps her in Rome. "But my age and infirmities warn me against the exposure of a long voyage and change of climate, though if Joseph had been in the Emperor's unhappy predicament I shouldn't hesitate for a moment."

She abandons her passivity with an occasional request for his liberation or an effort to solace him. Fesch had persuaded her to play billiards as a distraction from her troubles and in the hope of alleviating her rheumatism and migraine. "You should play billards too," she advises her son.

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Joseph and Lucien volunteer to spend three years alternately on the island and, through Antommarchi, Madame and Pauline repeat for the last time their desire to come. Pauline has started when they hear of his death; two months before. . . .

Madame refuses to see her children and she begs even her brother to leave her alone. The Palazzo Buonaparte is stupefied. The flow of letters to the children ceases, and many days pass before they make a chastened resumption.

"But her health does not suffer, and she seems better able to grapple with her sorrow than at Elisa's death." In August she can write to Julie that her health is good in spite of her great grief, "remarkably good, considering all I have suffered and have still to bear." But she cannot rouse herself from the deep melancholy which fills her life.

Sometimes she rises from her *douleurs* in lamentation. "My son has been overthrown; he has died miserably far from me. My other

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children are proscribed; I see them die one after the other. Those even of my grandchildren who hold promise for the future seem destined to disappear. I am old, forsaken, without *éclat* and without honour. But I would not change places with the first queen in the world."

She often consoles herself with the utterance: "I am more than an empress, for I am the mother of Napoleon the Great." The Emperor now is spoken of always "with veneration." She is sure "his genius was a work of Providence and not that of a man."

## Chapter IX

### THE PASSING OF THE BONAPARTES

QUIETLY she moves through the years in her darkened room, "with nothing to divert her, always thinking, thinking." She turns over her great memories, accompanying them with the *Te Deum* of the Coronation or the *Dies Irae* of Waterloo, until they are shattered by the voice of the guide on the sunlit Corso, "*Signor, ecco la madre di Napolione.*" The voice would lead her back to her usual comment: "The homage of today is worth as much as that of former years."

"Twenty years ago the drums would beat when I crossed the Place du Carrousel in Paris. The guards presented arms when I came into the Palace, and people crowded about my carriage to peer at me. Now I am only seen by a

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few who are restrained by fear of showing an undue curiosity. . . . But it is worth as much."

The letters she dictates to Rosa Mellini are chiefly distinctive for the growing facility in the use of medical terms. Her health is usually poor, *bien faible*, and her missives are burdened with *toutes les afflictions, toutes les peines* she must endure. But hers is not an aimless misery and even in her complainings she is practical, for she does not weep where her tears will not effect suitable and useful sympathy. She writes shrewdly of marriages and grandchildren's education.

She finds no satisfaction in reminiscences of the Empire. Before Napoleon's death she would sometimes discuss his career with Rosa Mellini, but Signora Mellini cannot comprehend that the world should require to know of the uneventful hours in the Palazzo; and Madame preferred to talk of Napoleon in the earliest Corsican days. Her interest now is in

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his destination rather than his destiny. Simply she asks a bishop if he believes her son has gone to heaven. "Madame, I believe so, but I've yet to make sure."

There are few visitors, but old soldiers are welcomed. Catherine and Hortense spend the winter in Rome, accompanied by their children, until her customary threat that she will confine them in the large copper press no longer subdues them and the place becomes too noisy. Others of her children come when they can obtain permission or if they imagine their interest in the will to be suffering. Cardinal Fesch comes every day. Jerome breaks an absence of ten years with a long visit. His voice is supposed to have grown like Napoleon's, and Madame weeps violently when he enters—"Elisa! Napoleon!" Elisa's had been the first death in the family for thirty years.

Pauline had lived with Madame for three years after Napoleon's death. He is uncertainly reported to have said that "Pauline and

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I were our mother's favourites. Pauline because she was the most beautiful and gracious, I perhaps because of one of those natural instincts which told her I should be the creator of the grandeur of her family." Pauline had gone to her husband to implore forgiveness for her infidelities. She asks that there should be no autopsy, that her beauty shall be kept covered afterwards, "sure that she will look such a fright when dead," fixes her eyes upon the portrait of Napoleon and follows him.

"We have lost poor Paoletta," writes Madame, "you can conceive my grief. My children are my only tie to life."

She was eighty years old when she broke her hip, whilst walking in the Borghese Park. Her drives to the Monte Pincio had soon to cease, for even with a mattress on the carriage floor they were too exhausting. Crippled, she lost her sight, but continued to spin and knit, and from her wheel-chair to superintend each affair of the household. She would awaken early and

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breakfast in bed from the little mahogany table the Emperor had used at St. Helena. Colonna would wheel her through the house when she was dressed. Newspapers would be read to her, or books, every work upon Napoleon. Nothing must be omitted when they read them. "Did they think she wasn't capable of hearing the truth? Napoleon was not infallible, and made an irreparable mistake in creating Murat King of Naples. She had foreseen the misfortune from the beginning. When she stood on a height which she did not desire and had never since missed, people thought her exceptionally happy; though she had a smile on her lips, could she be happy with death so close?"

"Tyrant they call him. No one who has ever seen him alone will call him tyrant. At least a hundred years must pass away before he is understood."

Jerome came earlier than usual. "Maman, can you hear me? The papers say that orders

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have been given for replacing the Emperor's statue on the Vendôme column."

Two days later Madame exchanged her bed for a sofa. "The Emperor's statue to be erected. The Emperor in the heart of Paris again." A little model of the figure was put into her hands—"My poor eyes, how I miss them! If I were in Paris, God would give me strength to climb up the column to convince myself the Emperor is at the top. They may be deceiving the blind and crippled old mother." If she had a visitor—"Had he been at the unveiling? Was the statue a fine one, and was it conspicuous?"

Her dignity in exile had modestly adorned the Napoleonic legend. The French people asked that she should spend her last days among them. But what could she find in France to counterbalance the indignities which their rulers would not spare her—rulers whose injustice would not allow them to forgive the honours her family had acquired? Signora

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Mellini wrote with the joy of Johnson silencing Chesterfield. Madame finished by asking to "remain unmolested in her grief and to exercise the strength of her will to the end."

During the last months of her life her conversation reverted constantly to her husband, the babies she had lost in Corsica, to Napoleon and Louis and Hortense and their children. "There is some evil influence hanging over the third generation of the Bonapartes; they die a violent death." Her grandson, Prince Bacciochi, had crushed his head in a fall from his horse.

Her strength decayed gradually; she relaxed her hold upon life slowly, and her intellect was fairly vigorous to the end. The bells were ringing for evensong when on February 2nd, 1836, she died, with Fesch and her sons Jerome and Lucien about her bed, Dr. Ramolino (a distant relative), Rosa Mellini, and Colonna. The sculptor Thorwaldsen was brought to take a

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cast of her features, for immediately after death they glowed with the beauty of her matronhood.

Considerable legacies were left to members of the family, with an additional and significant gift for Caroline of a pearl necklace. She asked that her heart should be buried in Ajaccio.

The Papal government insisted that the funeral ceremonies should be simple in order not to give offence to the French king. The display of the Imperial arms on the church door was forbidden, but they were embroidered on the corners of the pall and surmounted by the Imperial eagle holding in golden letters "L.R.B., Mater Napoleonis." She was buried at Carneto near Civita Vecchia; years later her coffin was removed to Ajaccio and buried with that of Fesch, according to their mutual wish.

Few women have known such tremendous vicissitudes: swept in ten years from a destitu-

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tion to which forty laborious years had led her, to within reach of the riches of Europe. No mother has accompanied her son to such stupendous heights and through such incredible catastrophe. Never has modest self-realization been more steadily pursued. Marvellously self-possessed, she moved through a world of fantastic exaggerations, undefeated by poverty and antagonistic fate, neither deluded nor diverted by one of the most splendid dominions of history, and unshaken in ruin and disaster.

The pre-eminent purposes of her life were to bear her husband children (perhaps induced also by the honour promised the Corsican woman who should deliver a saviour unto her people), to yield herself in meticulous attention to their childhood's requirements, and to maintain the ties between them later in life. She fulfilled her purposes faithfully, producing thirteen children, and among them the most prodigious example of human faculty of which we have reliable knowledge. How much of his

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powers he derived from her can only be briefly speculated on here. Although he left her early, at nine years of age, hers may still be claimed the strongest of personal influences in his life. His genius had already taken its course when he departed for Brienne. Whether she would have frustrated it is doubtful, for he can scarcely have been deeply serious when he thought it "fortunate he had gone; his mother would never have given way to him and would have quelled all his warlike impulses." Usually he seems decided on the generous measure of his inheritance from her. Even his famous tribute is not altogether meaningless in its calculated piety: "To my mother, to her sound principles, I owe all my success and all I have; I don't hesitate to say a child's future depends upon his mother."

From his father (and in Carlo Bonaparte, after all, there was nothing mean or illiberal) he received the imagination, the thirst for authority and a splendid destiny, the unceasing

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enterprise which transported him from the camp to the throne and drew him to the final catastrophe. But it is his mother's sanity which reappears in the perfect common sense of the Consulate years. Her capacity for intense concentration, instanced not wholly with frivolity in her perfection as a reversi player, suggests the ruling discipline of his mind; her essential soundness of intellect and a constitution which withstood the ravages of thirteen children and nearly ninety years of life, his inexhaustible physical and mental strength. The pugnacity of the island people can hardly have been lost in its descent through her, who followed the army of independence to the battlefield "wholly pre-occupied with Corsica and Corsica's fate," who "urged her husband and his friends to fight on" when defeat was near, who bade Paoli defiance when he insisted she should abjure the cause of her sons.

As a young mother she remarked early the conspicuous characteristic which distinguished

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him from his brothers: not his arithmetical tastes, nor the curious seriousness of nursery exercises with the drum and wooden sword she had bought him, neither his aggressions against the family order nor his dominion over his brothers, but his intrepidity. "Of all my children he was from the first years the most intrepid." She describes his mounting and mastering a young pony, his laughter at the agent's fright. It was a quality as potent as any in his career, yet so obvious that it is often forgotten. And this intrepidity in action appears in his mother, frequently and suddenly, as if in manifestation of wholly masculine powers of decision.

"*C'est une maîtresse femme.*" Even the Bonapartes could agree in their appreciation. "Strong and good woman," apostrophizes Joseph, with sincerity but a hint of fatuity; "model of mothers: how much are your children still indebted to you for your examples." Both to Lucien and Jerome she was the "best

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and most beloved of mothers." A final tribute (her own) has paradoxical justness: "Severe or indulgent as occasion required . . . obeyed and loved by my children, who even in manhood always showed me unchanging affection and respect." The incidental suggestion is not the only one that she was supported in life by a worthy self-esteem.











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